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Preface (re-upload)

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May 2nd
Midnight

May 2nd, midnight. At the second gymnasium—

The second gymnasium located at Karasuno High School in the Miyagi prefecture is dark and cold, and very quiet.

The second gymnasium could only accommodate a single court, and although small, it was kept clean. For many years, only the male volleyball club would use this gymnasium. Therefore, even after the club activities, the loosened net remained hanging in its usual spot.

With its doors and windows tightly shut, the net remained still in its spot in the stuffy gymnasium

As if patiently waiting for the members to arrive.

The earliest to reach the gymnasium every day would be the club's first year members Hinata and Kageyama.

The two of them were always competing with each other to be the earliest to reach the gymnasium. The two new members would always dash into the gymnasium with heavy breaths, their faces flushed while blown by the morning breeze.

The originally dark gymnasium lit up.

Nearing 7 in the morning, the members, the club manager, the coach and the main coach would arrive one by one. After everyone has gathered, the second gymnasium became lively all of a sudden, everyone feeling enthusiastic.

Then, all kinds of sounds would fill the gymnasium.

The sound of people pushing the trolley of volleyballs.
The sound of rubber soles rubbing against the waxed floor.

The sound of balls bouncing onto the floor, vibrating across the air in the gymnasium.

Murmurs and cheers.

The sound of members clapping their hands.

Despite being all sweaty, the members smile occasionally.

With the blow of the whistle, the members gather around the coach.

After getting reprimanded, everyone cheered again.

The gymnasium, filled with sounds and heat, was at its most lively state. But now, the second gymnasium is still enveloped in darkness and in its deep slumber.

At this time, the members were probably thinking about the second gymnasium too. Everyone had the second gymnasium in their minds before they sleep.

Some would wake up and check through their belongings once again; some of them training their muscles with drive; some who already slept to prepare for tomorrow's training; while some couldn't fall asleep due to expectation and excitement, hence visiting the washroom again and again.....

Slowly, the last member fell asleep too. They're probably still thinking about the second gymnasium even in their dreams.

Once the day breaks, the training camp would begin.

They're finally going to practice day and night without stopping, devoting themselves fully to volleyball.....!

The morning of the training camp (re-upload)

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May 2nd
6am

on May 2nd, 6am, at Hinata's house—
Hinata Shouyou stood at the dimly lit porch.

The canvas shoes felt cooling as Hinata put them on. He tied his shoelaces feeling slightly nervous, his fully packed sling bag sitting right beside him.

“Alright!”

Hinata stood up feeling pumped, a relaxed voice appeared from behind him.

“Ni-chan... are you going on an excursion with that bag?”

“Didn't I already say it a lot of times, I'm going to the training camp?”

Hinata's younger sister, Natsu, had just woken up. She rubbed her eyes as she made her way down the stairs. After answering her, Hinata shouted “Osu!”, then carried his bag on his shoulders.

Today was the day before the start of Golden week, which was also the start of the long-awaited training camp.

He was clear that this was no excursion, but aside from toiletries and changing clothes, the bag was also stuffed full of snacks, mangas, snacks, snacks, poker cards and more snacks, to the point where it's about to burst open.

Hearing the sibling's conversation, Hinata's mum peeked out from behind the curtains.

“I heard that starting from tonight, he's going to stay in the dormitory throughout the whole week.”

Hearing this, the sleepy Natsu suddenly opened her eyes wide.

“What? I want to go too!”

“Speaking of which, Shouyou, you have lessons as per normal today, right? Did you bring any class materials in your bag?”

Hinata’s mum pulled away Natsu, who refused to let go of Hinata, as she asked him. Indeed, even though Hinata’s bag was packed full of stuff, it looked too light, with no books or notebooks packed into it.

“Yeah, I have them all in school, it’s no problem!”

Hinata answered energetically. Ignoring his mum’s suspicious looking eyes, he rushed forward to open the front door.

“Alright, I’m leaving, then!”

“Hey, Shouyou!”

Hinata heard his mum’s voice coming from behind, then unlocked his bicycle with a key, and started pedaling.

The morning practice begins at 7am, of course there was no room for lateness.

The time needed to reach Karasuno High School from Yukigaoka Town would take about 30 minutes on bicycle— if cycling on full speed. Although there was still ample time, there was no way of hiding the excitement for the training camp for Hinata.

“Great!”

He was so excited from the anticipation his heart rate increased, his face plastered with a proud smile.

Once on his bicycle, Hinata placed his focus on the road ahead while pedaling. There he goes.

“Be careful on the road!”

Natsu waved at him from the porch, her voice resonated throughout the morning sky. Dashing out from his house, Hinata’s back view grew smaller and smaller, then blended into the surrounding fields.

“This child...”

Thinking how her son would only return in the evening four days later, Hinata’s

mum suddenly felt lonely. But still she patted her daughter on her shoulders, and regained her energy.

“Come, let’s have breakfast.”

“Okay.”

Natsu, who couldn’t bear to see her brother leave, turned around once again, her eyes suddenly grew wide.

“Eh?”

“What’s wrong?”

Hinata’s mum looked towards where Natsu was pointing at, then saw Hinata pedaling on his bicycle in full speed towards them. The initially worried mum, hearing her son scream, could not hide the twitch on her face.

“I forgot the shoes I just washed yesterday!”

“Seriously, didn’t I tell you a lot of times to prepare properly?”

Just as Hinata’s mum was screaming at him, Natsu, wearing Hinata’s flip flops, ran towards the courtyard to retrieve the shoes that were hanging on the drying rack.

“Ni-chan, for you!”

“Thanks!”

Hinata caught onto the shoes thrown in his direction, stuffed them into his bag forcefully, then proceeded to head out once again.

“I’m leaving!”

“Be careful.”

“Bye bye Ni-chan!”

The mother and daughter, who were just waving at Hinata, felt a twitch on their faces again.

“Ah, Ni-chan’s back again.”

“What is it this time...”

Hinata stopped his bicycle in front of them, the small pebbles on the floor

flying around due to its wheels.

“Bento! Bento! Bento!”

Hinata jumped from his bicycle, then rushed into the porch, grabbed a big Bento bag, then rushed out again. Seeing her brother running about in front of her, Natsu mumbled to herself.

“Ni-chan can really jump.”

Hinata slung his bag onto his back, then jumped right back onto his bicycle.

“Then, I’m really leaving this time!”

With a slight smoke raised from the ground, the bicycle turned into the road, disappearing in front of the mother and daughter.

They finally heaved a sigh of relief.

“..... Should be alright now. Then, quickly change your clothes and have breakfast.”

“Okay.”

Hinata’s mum patted the dust away from Natsu’s clothes, then walked into the house and resumed preparation for breakfast.

“Seriously, this boy is so careless, how should I put it, just who does he take after...”

Hinata’s mum sighed as she reheated the miso soup. Then, the front door opened again.

Hinata’s mum dropped the ladle from her hand.

“Ni-chan?”

Natsu exclaimed in surprise while holding onto her bag on the second floor.

Then, a pale looking Hinata pressing on his tummy rushed into the house.

“T-T-T-T-Toilet! Toilet! Toilet!”

.....

“Alright, no more problem! I can do it!”

Under his mum’s glare, Hinata checked the contents in his bag once again,

then looked at the time on the television screen.

6:20am.

“Woah! It’s already so late? That’s later than usual!”

Hinata stumbled towards the front door, which had been left open from just now, then picked up his bicycle. He had wanted to be the first to reach the gymnasium, but at this rate, Kageyama might’ve already reached...

“Damn it!”

Hinata pouted.

No matter how trivial a matter, even if it was just the order in which they enter the gymnasium, Hinata did not want to lose to Kageyama, who is also a first year student. Just imagining Kageyama’s proud looking face looking down at him from a height of 180cm...

“... Kageyama that guy, what’s so great about him.”

Natsu’s voice sounded at this time, as if she’d read his mind.

“Don’t lose to Tobio-chan!”

Hinata’s sister waved towards him from inside, and Hinata raised his hand in return. “Alright!” He pedaled hard on his bicycle.

He’s finally leaving, at last.

—

Feeling the breeze in May with his entire body, on the road that he had cycled on every day since the starting of school about a month ago, Hinata cycled faster than he usually did. Once he passed by the shops in front, he will reach the prefectural road. Afterwards he’ll have to cycle straight up the hill, and after coming down from the hill he’ll finally reach the school!

“Perhaps, I might just break my personal record today!”

Because of the distance—not to mention the many slopes, when school first started, Hinata was always very exhausted while cycling to school. But now he’d trained enough, hence it was no longer a chore. He even planned to break his personal record of reaching school on his bicycle in less than 30 minutes.

The morning breeze is very fresh, making people feel very comfortable. Hinata became even more excited.

What's more, the training camp will start today!

In Junior high, because there were not enough members, Hinata could only depend on himself to look for various ways to practice. To him, a training camp that spans from morning till night every day was really, real~~~ly exciting.

The bicycle turned into a bend and into the row of shops. Most of the shops were still no opened. Hinata rode past in a shocking speed, a certain store appeared in front of his eyes.

"... Ah!"

The shutters were still down, but Hinata could not help but press on the brakes. Leaning his body forward, he stopped the bicycle with one foot on the ground, then looked up at the shop sign.

"This electronics store..."

Quite an ordinary electronics store, but this was where the young Hinata "met" the little giant for the first time.

"Just like a little giant!"

Hinata could not help but recall the commentator's remark on that day.

The television placed in front of the store was showing a small-sized player, who could run faster and jump higher than anyone on the court.

Amidst so many tall players, that particular player was the only one to score continuously. His teammates were patting him on his back, as if praising him...

They were wearing black uniforms, with the characters "Karasuno" embroidered in white. That was Karasuno High School from the neighbouring town.

"Ooh, wah..."

The then-elementary school student Hinata could not take his eyes off of the short player, who was just like him.

He didn't know the rules of volleyball.

But he still thought of it this way.

I want to become someone like him!

– Then, finally in spring this year, Hinata entered his dream Karasuno High School Men's Volleyball Club in Miyagi prefecture.

“Everything began from here...!”

Hinata clamped his mouth, staring at the shutters. Then, he lowered his head and pedaled on his bicycle once again.

Then, he felt as if he heard the sound of cheers from somewhere.

The sharp sound of the whistle, the loud sound of the taiko drums, the sound of shoes screeching along the floor, the sound of a ball bouncing towards the ceiling, along with the murmurs of the players. In a court full of heat, and the smell of salonpas...

He can feel it, under the black sports uniform from Karasuno's men's volleyball club, his whole body covered with goosebumps.

His palms on the handles started to sweat, his heartbeat increased in its speed.

He wants to, with his legs...

To continue jumping, jumping, jumping, far higher than anyone else.

He wants to stand on that court, on the national's court!

A loud sound from beside Hinata sounded.

“W-What is it?”

A huge black shadow flew past. A crow flew from above the plastic container lying beside the electronics store.

“Scared me...”

Hinata chased after the crow, then saw it stopping above the clock on the arch on the street.

6:30am.

“I... should not be late, but I have to hurry!”

Hinata grabbed onto the handles and left the electronics store. Pedaling on his bicycle, he could not contain his excitement.

I want to practice, practice quick! I want to become stronger!

Hinata's face was warm and red. Just as he was about to leave, someone called him from behind.

"Shouyou-chan!"

"Hmm?"

"Shouyou-chan, are you going for morning practice?"

It's the lady boss from the vegetables and fruits stall, who was just preparing to open the stall. Hinata pressed on the brakes, and, slightly raising his chest, he answered:

"I'm having training camp starting today!"

"Ah, is that so, then take this to your members! If you're free, do come back to the mum's volleyball club!"

The lady boss put down the cardboard boxes, then pounded on her waist while handing Hinata a paper bag full of lemons.

"Wow! Can I? Thank you!"

Hinata placed the paper bag into the bicycle's basket, and after thanking the lady boss, he waved as he rode off on his bicycle.

"That's great."

One could see such rare instances on the not-yet-open-for-business street, how interesting.

The granny from the salon was just picking up the wastes from Lucky, her pet Shiba Inu, in front of the car park. On usual days, Hinata would run over to play with Lucky.

"Woof!"

Lucky barked as it wagged its tail, its dark eyes so cute while staring at Hinata...

but, no! I can't be late today!

Hinata suppressed his desire to play with Lucky. He pressed on the brakes, then patted the dog on its head while on the bicycle.

"Good morning, Lucky."

"Ey, Shouyou, that's a lot of stuff you're bringing with you. You're not going to play with Lucky today?"

"Yeah, because I'm running late for my morning practice."

Hinata shrugged while sticking his tongue out. The uncle from the meat stall beside smiled while saying: "Buy a croquette when you return, then. I'll prepare a freshly fried one for Shoyou-chan." Hinata suddenly felt his mouth filled with the aroma of croquette ...

"Then, I'll buy one when I get back... ah, sorry, I have to stay for the training camp today!"

"Is that so! Please work hard and make it to the nationals!"

"... Yes!"

Hinata had a face full of smile as he replied the uncle. Then, he pedaled on his bicycle once again.

"Work hard!"

Hearing the uncle cheering him on, Hinata blushed as he raised his hand, then pedaled fast on his bicycle. As he rode uphill, passing by the dry cleaning store, his bicycle shook left and right, the wind blowing against Hinata's ears.

Reaching towards the end of the shopping street, Hinata turned left at the Y-junction, his bicycle now on the broader prefectural road.

The trees alongside the road felt greener under the morning sun. The road from here till the top of the hill was straight. Hinata decided to reclaim the time spent unknowingly at the shopping street just now on this straight road.

The rays of sunlight shone down from the slits between the leaves. Hinata increased his speed on the even ground, wind blowing against his face. To be honest, this road heading towards the hill top was the only road without much

traffic lights, making it the only place where Hinata can enjoy full speed.

“La la la ♪”

Hinata rode on his bicycle happily. A few kilometres in front, a guy wearing his work attire blew on his whistle while standing on the side of the road.

“Hmm?”

It was the traffic maintenance guy. Hinata pressed on his brakes immediately. The guy nodded at him, then blew on his whistle with rhythm while signaling the buses to drive into the road.

“Eh?”

Hinata stepped onto the ground softly, stopping his bicycle. The empty buses passed by him one by one.

One, two, three, four, five of them...

Probably because he was in the hurry, the movements of the car felt very slow to Hinata.

“Ooh~~”

After all the buses got onto the road, the guy bowed at Hinata once again.

“So sorry for the inconvenience at such hours, probably due to the holidays, more people have booked the buses in advance for travel...”

“Ah, it’s fine it’s fine.”

Hinata bowed immediately as well, then continued on his journey.

—

“Of all days, I got stopped on my path at unexpected places...”

Hinata increased his speed as he became more worried. He finally reached the end of the straight road.

The bend had now appeared right in front of him, the tall buildings and shops becoming lesser. Once he passed by the bridge above the river and onto the slopes, the scenery around would change from that of a city’s to those of a hill’s.

“Alright!”

Hinata regained his energy. His bicycle is just an ordinary one where housewives would ride to the market. It didn't have any speed changing functions, but he rode up the hill with astonishing speed. As he rode past the trees lining along the hills, a few sparrows, who were hiding within the grasses flew away in shock.

Just then, Hinata noticed a black shadow moving speedily in the grasses.

"Eh? What is this?"

Hinata confirmed once again nervously. The black shadow turned out to be a black cat.

"Eh? Hey, kitty, that's dangerous!"

But all the cat did was stare at Hinata with its yellow marble-like eyes.

"Ooh, those fierce looking eyes... Speaking of which, you do run fast, huh!"

The black cat turned around and jumped onto the road from the grasses. It started to run towards Hinata, as if challenging him to a race.

".....Hmm, what? You want to compete with me? Okay then, I will not lose to a cat!"

Hinata smiled proudly, then pedaled hard on his bicycle. Just then, he suddenly thought of something.

"Hmm, I will not lose to a... cat? I feel like I've said this before..."

Hinata tilted his head while recalling, then his eyes glistened.

"Right, it's Nekoma!"

He'll be competing against Nekoma in four days' time.

Their fated rivals!

An important match! Cat versus the Crows! "Battle of the trash heaps!"

Hinata grabbed onto the handles once again.

He must become stronger and stronger at this training camp...

"I will not lose to a cat!"

That's right, no matter the time of the day, he had to continue practicing. Even

if he would puke, or even spit out blood. All of these don't matter, as long as he continued practicing, even for serves, he will never..... ever fail again... that's right, it's not just with Kageyama's quick attacks, even with Sugawara senpai's tosses, he has to hit them all! Hence, hence...

In Hinata's now uncontrolled mind, the little giant appeared once again.

"Me too! I want to jump like him!"

He screamed all of a sudden. Just as he was crazily pedaling on his bicycle, a white cat appeared in front of him.

"Eh? Wow, that was dangerous.....!"

Hinata pressed onto the brakes hurriedly, the back wheel bounced upwards.

"Eh?"

Hinata felt himself lifted up from the seat.

"Uwah, Ah, lemons!"

He stretched out his hands and grabbed onto the paper bag that had flown out from the basket.

"That's weird?"

Once he returned to his senses, Hinata felt his whole body thrown off of his bike.

"I-I..... I'm flyingggggggggggggggg!"

Under a cloudless sky, the morning dew glistening on the leaves.
The sound of bird chirping.
The scenery on the hills in May, is truly beautiful.

While in the air, everything Hinata saw was flipped. He saw one of his canvas shoes rolling on the road, along with the two cats, as he fell to the ground slowly.

—

Chirp chirp chirp, the sound of the sparrows went into his ears. Hinata touched his injured leg while squatting alongside the metal chains by the side of the road.

“So painful...”

Probably because he landed on his sling bag, even though he fell hard on the ground, he remained mostly uninjured. Compared to this, his leg, which hit onto the pedal, was more painful.

What was pitiful were his snacks, which have all been smashed in his bag.

“Hu..... my prawn crackers...”

Seeing his smashed snacks, Hinata became very upset. Also, his hand had become dirty with grease from the metal chains. It reeked of the smell of metal.

The white cat from just now ran over, leaning against Hinata’s knee.

“Ah, it’s you, are you okay?”

“Meow.”

“That’s great... Ah, are you guys brothers?”

Hinata spotted the black cat from just now staring at him.

“Why are you so angry? Right, do you guys want these snacks? Would it be too salty?”

Hinata opened the packet, then poured a bit of the smashed snacks onto his palms. The black cat approached them, its tail raised. Both cats started sniffing the snacks.

“You guys don’t look too alike, the white one looks more lovable, you’re not brothers but friends, then? That’s great.”

Hinata smiled after saying. Just then, something fell from the sky.

“Hmm? What is this?”

He held onto a single sakura petal with his dirtied hands.

Hinata looked up, then realised he’s right under a sakura tree in full bloom.

“Wow~!”

He arched his back backwards. All he saw was the sakura tree and the blue sky.

“So beautiful... Wowwwwww.”

He arched his back too much and fell down. Surrounding him were grass patches in the springtime, and it smelled of freshness. He touched the soft ground with his hands, the cats jumped onto his body, the petals falling.

“Sakuras on the hills bloom later than those in the city...”

Hinata let the cats lean against his knees, his eyes fixed onto the falling sakura petals. Then, he suddenly thought how interesting it would be if everyone in the volleyball club can come together to look at the flowers. The flowers in the school had already wilted, if everyone came during lunch break, they'll definitely be surprised...

However, Hinata tilted his head in thought again.

“Hmm, this idea seems...?”

Hinata frowned as he adjusted his position, his leg stretched out. The cats wanted to grab onto his sports uniform with their claws while sliding down from his knee, but to no avail. The cats purred in discontent while Hinata fell into deep thoughts.

He'll not mention who it is, but even if he didn't mention who, a guy he dislikes is a guy he dislikes... some guys just can't be friends with him. It felt awkward just thinking about coming to this place with that person.

To come to this place with Kageyama, then, sitting side by side on a picnic mat, they laugh together while eating onigiris, or exchanging the side dishes in their respective bentos, with Kageyama saying “let's eat” as he receives a sausage cut into the shape of an octopus from him...?

“...Urgh!”

Under the falling petals, Hinata only felt a chill down his spine. He stood up immediately.

“...Hmm, we can't do that, nope.”

We probably can't become close friends, and there's no need to, too.”

I just want to play volleyball with everyone else! I want to become stronger with everyone else! I want to get into competitions! I want to win!

That's all Hinata ever thought about.

“Alright!”

Hinata stuffed the snacks back into his bag, then took out his hand phone to check the time.

6:45am.

“Ah, I’ll be late... no, I’ll probably make it if I rush a little now! I will definitely make it!”

Hinata grabbed onto the handles with his dirtied hands, then said “be careful of the cars!” to the cats, who are now licking themselves clean under the sun. Hinata waved at them, then, releasing the tripod on his bicycle, the petals on his head flew.

He looked in front of the road, his eyes fixated only on the next victory.

The victory against Nekoma!

Hinata breathed heavily as he pedaled on his bicycle, his face fully red. It can’t be just due to the cold wind.

—

“... Okay, I’ll take the shortcut!”

Hinata took a turn on the road in front.

If cycling on this road, the time taken would be reduced significantly. But there’s a reason why he doesn’t take this road on usual days, and that’s because there’s a very steep slope along the way. No words can better describe this slope. Everyone called this the “Heartbreak hill”...

Hinata, who was rushing for time, felt his back stiffened due to nervousness.

Once he reached the famous hill, Hinata could not help but stop his bicycle, then raised his head to look at the top of the hill. He swallowed as he looked at the hill, which looked just like a wall. Its inclination at 7 degrees is almost at the limit of the public roads*. Even for students who were used to riding bicycles to school, those who had no confidence in their stamina would never take this route. Hinata avoided this route on usual days as well.

*The inclination limit for public roads is at 9 degrees.

However, he can't afford to be late. Hence he could only take this route today.

"Alright..."

Hinata had his mind set. He stepped onto the pedals, then started scaling up the hill.

"Ooh... my bags, is so heavy...."

His forehead was already covered in sweat.

Speaking of which, why did I bring along mangas and poker cards... if Kageyama saw them, he'll definitely say things like "are you here to play?", while glaring at me... Kageyama would definitely not play monopoly while snacking on chocolate biscuit sticks, right...

...

"hurgh, hurgh, hurgh, hoo, hurgh..."

Beads of sweat fell from Hinata's forehead.

While scaling the steep slope, the sound of engine neared Hinata. This meant that a public bus was approaching.

"Hoo, t-this..."

The public bus, which was full of passengers, passed by his bicycle almost immediately.

"Damn it.....!"

Hinata looked up, his face met with the smoke coming out from the exhaust pipe behind the bus. He felt as though he saw some familiar faces among the students on the bus.

"Eh?"

He took a closer look at that face from the glass window. Was he imagining things because it was too tiring?

No, he wasn't mistaken. The people on the bus were the same people from his junior high years, who helped him on his first and last official volleyball match that lasted only 31 minutes.

Now that they're studying in a different high school, and although it had only been a month since the start of school, Hinata had already started to miss them a lot.

"Izumi... Koji!"

Hinata leaned his body forward, and, raising his waist, tried to catch up with the bus with his bicycle.

"Wait a minuteeeeeeeeeeeeeee!"

His body shifted left and right, his face showed a desperate expression. He finally caught up with the bus.

"Woahhhhhhhhhhh!"

The heavier than usual bag became quite a burden, his legs all feeling hot from pedaling so hard. Hinata ignored his surrounding, focusing fully on the green car plate in front of him while pedaling continuously. However, no matter how much of an athletic person Hinata was, his bicycle just would not move as fast as he wanted to, especially on a steep slope like this, hence, catching up on the bus was by no means an easy feat.

"Hurgh.... Hoo, damn it—!"

He continued cycling to get nearer to the bus, his breath growing heavy. Even for a bus, it was still slightly challenging to scale a slope this steep. Brroooooom, the engine sounded once again as the bus increased its speed, the heat from the exhaust blew onto Hinata's face, his sweat on his forehead blown away by the wind almost immediately.

"..... A. BIT. MORE!"

The passengers on the bus noticed what was going on outside, and they were all caught in shock.

"Hey, what's that guy doing?"

"This is no ordinary slope, eh? That guy riding that ordinary bike is awesome!"

"Hey, good luck."

The students on the bus opened the window out of boredom, then pointed at

Hinata, cheering him on. The two people who were sitting at the last row also noticed the commotion, then looked out of the window.

“... Hey, isn’t that Shouyou?”

“Eh?”

Ex-soccer club member Sekimukai Koji, or simply known as Koji, lifted the window. He frowned and looked out as the cold wind blew in.

“Shouyou! What are you doing?”

Using both his arms and legs to chase after the bus, Hinata looked at the two people who finally noticed him, then giggled to himself... but probably in the eyes of others, his smiling face was all twisted.

“Hurgh, hurgh, I-I..... I mean me! Ooh, ooh.... I-I’m now, really happy! Urgh...”

Seeing the exhausted Hinata, Koji was caught in shock.

“Uh, no no no, you look like you’re going to puke.”

“No, that’s not it! I’m not talking about now, I mean I joined the volleyball club! I-I’m going for the training camp today! Training camp!”

“Is that so, that’s awesome! How’s your current club? Are the senpais scary?”

Ex-basketball club member Izumi Yukitaka also showed his endearing freckled face.

“Nah, the senpais are all very kind...”

Just as Hinata was a bit at a loss for words, his bicycle shook suddenly.

“Ooh, wah!”

Hinata’s speed decreased, the distance between him and the bus grew apart. Izumi, who leaned out from the window, screamed:

“Are you okay?”

Hinata clenched his teeth as he caught up:

“... compared to the senpais, to be very honest, the first years are scarier!”

“Eh?”

“Really! Do you guys remember this tall guy from the match in Junior high? That guy is damn scary!”

“That guy?”

“Ah, I remember him!”

Izumi and Koji looked at each other happily. Hinata continued saying:

“But what’s most frustrating is that he’s really awesome! Without his tosses, I wouldn’t be able to perform quick attacks!”

Upon finishing what he said, Hinata suddenly came to a realisation.

That’s right.

If there’s no quick attack from that guy—if there’s no Kageyama, I wouldn’t be considered an attack force.

However, Kageyama has grown taller since junior high, and he’s become better too. He even learnt to do jump serves...

Seeing Hinata’s expression changing into a serious one, Izumi and Koji looked at each other again.

“..... Ah, I-I’m very sorry!”

Hinata apologised profusely. Izumi smiled.

“Don’t be, Shouyou. I think you’re doing just fine!”

“Eh?”

Seeing Hinata’s surprised expression, Koji smiled as well.

“It’s great that your school has a volleyball club!”

“Ah...”

Hearing this, Hinata became at a loss for words.

During the Junior high years...

In the corner of the gymnasium or the field, in order not to disturb the other clubs, Hinata could only practice secretly on his own. After school he’d plead with the female volleyball club to let him practice with them together, then he’d check on the male volleyball club’s practice hours by himself, and during school breaks he would go to the community gymnasium to practice together with

them, not forgetting his friends who made use of their free time during their own club activities to practice passing with him...

Although it was tough and frustrating... but precisely because of those three years, Hinata could do what he wanted to do now!

Hinata lifted his head suddenly.
He had a face full of smiles, then, with his hair blown messy by the wind, he shouted at the two people who were looking out the window:

“Yeah, I’m very happy I got into Karasuno High! It’s all thanks to everyone, thanks to you two!”

“Ey, here you go again! Didn’t we tell you not to mention it again?”

“You’re making me embarrassed!”

Just then, the bus picked up speed once again. They’ve finally reached the peak of the slope. After the turn it’d be a downslope, the bus picked up speed once again.

“Ah, wait.....”

Hinata had wanted to continue giving chase, but his two friends waved at him as they say:

“You can’t spend all your energy before the training camp!”

“Your teammates must be waiting for you!”

“.....!”

Hinata stopped pedaling, the distance between him and the bus grew further and further apart. Hinata raised his hand, then waved firmly.

“Yeah, bye bye! I’ll send you guys a message soon!”

Seeing his two friends waving towards him from the window, Hinata smiled to himself, slightly embarrassed, then waved with both his hands continuously.

“Bye!”

The bus took another turn, then disappeared into the other end.

—

Hinata cycled downhill with ease. He took a glance at his hands on the the

handles.

If Izumi and Koji hadn't helped him on that day, he wouldn't have been able to make it to the court. If that's the case, he wouldn't have had the chance to fight against Kitagawa Daiichi, and perhaps, he wouldn't have quarreled with Kageyama the second time they met at the gymnasium. If that's the case, there wouldn't have been the secret training in the morning, nor would there be the 3v3 match...

He clenched his fist, tightening his grip on the handles. He still felt that connection with the balls set by both Izumi and Koji back then, even till now.

He wants to become stronger.

Everything that was lost back then, can all be found in Karasuno right now. Practice, experience, a coach, a practice partner, and a training camp!

"My teammates are waiting for me... Ah."

Hinata picked up speed as he approached the bend. In the cold wind, Miyagi, the neighbouring town, appeared right in front of his eyes. He'll reach the school soon. His teammates all waiting for him at the gymnasium.

".....Wait for.....me? Ah! I can't let them wait for me!"

Hinata fished out his hand phone from his bag's pocket.

The time is about to change from 6:50 am to 6:51 am.

"Woah! I'm left with less than 10 minutes!"

Hinata dashed downhill with all the energy he has left.

—

Hinata parked his bicycle hurriedly in a nearly empty car park. Although it was slightly messy, he couldn't be bothered about it right now. He ran towards the second gymnasium on the back of the school.

Sliding open the heavy metal doors, Hinata looked up at the clock on the wall to his right.

6:58 am.

“I made it...”

Hinata heaved a sigh of relief, but Kageyama appeared in front of him immediately, his expression unpleasant.

“You’re too late.”

“Uh... that, something happened along the way...”

“What exactly happened along the way!”

Kageyama closed in on Hinata, his furious eyes threatening. Hinata was slightly taken aback, “Ah, I...”, then shrunk his shoulders. Captain Sawamura looked over from behind Hinata, then sighed.

“Are you guys quarreling again? Why can’t you guys learn your lesson.....”

“Because they’re idiots.”

Tsukishima said as he appeared out of nowhere, his expression unchanged. Yamaguchi spouted “Tsukki.....”, but got glared at by him instead. Yamaguchi could only keep quiet.

“So full of energy right in the morning, that’s great!”

“You’re full of energy too, Tanaka.”

Tanaka, who was wearing a fur hat, along with Sugawara, who was carrying plastic bags from the convenience store, walked into the gymnasium as well. Nishinoya ran into the gymnasium with small steps, then looked around with his hands on his hip. He shouted:

“Is Asahi-san going to appear at the last moment again?”

“.....S-Sorry.”

Asahi appeared a few steps behind Nishinoya, his expression looking scared.

In the slightly chilly gymnasium, Hinata looked on as his teammates appeared one by one, then, he smiled slightly.

“..... Hehehe.”

*A tall, tall wall looms right in front of me.
What is the view on the other side of the wall?*

What should I do to be able to see it?

The view from the top—

It's a view that I can't see on my own.

However, if I'm not doing this alone, I just might be able to see it—

“... Hey, what are you doing?”

Kageyama looked on at me in surprise, frowning.

So infuriating, this detestable fellow.

However, if there's no Kageyama, I wouldn't be considered an attack force.

If there's Kageyama around.....

I would be able to jump!

The clock hanging on the wall struck seven.

Hinata's expression lit up as he straighten his back.

“Good morning!”

After giggling to himself, as if he couldn't hold it in any longer, Hinata jumped upwards.

“... Fantastic, it's the training camp!”

“Hey, there're still lessons per normal today.”

Sawamura reminded him, but Hinata had already dashed straight into the equipment room.

-end-

Finding Hinata! (re-upload)

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May 3rd

7 am

On May 3rd, nearing 7 am, at the dormitory—

Hinata Shouyou put on his slippers and dashed downstairs. He saw Kageyama Tobio at the porch, who had just returned from outside.

Hinata looked at Kageyama, who was bending down untying his shoelaces. He asked:

“..... Did you just went for a jog?”

“What else do you think I did?”

“Nothing, I just thought I didn’t see you just now. I went out for the jog as well.”

Hearing this, Kageyama lifted his head. Hinata continued saying:

“Then, because the weather was good, so I came back to help everyone with hanging their blankets out to dry!”

“You even did those.....”

Kageyama mumbled to himself in both shock and admiration, while looking at Hinata’s back as he ran towards the canteen. Faced with a person like Hinata, who would never pick an easier route no matter when, Kageyama’s suddenly very much wanted to pit himself against Hinata.

Hinata on the other hand had no idea what Kageyama was thinking, all he thought of was breakfast. Upon opening the canteen’s door, Hinata shouted:

“Wow! So many food just for breakfast!”

The table was filled with lots of varieties of food, each giving out a delicious aroma and piping hot. Hinata then noticed the senpais who were preparing

breakfast.

“Ah, sorry! I’ll help!”

Breakfast includes salt baked salmon with teriyaki chicken, tamago yaki, stir fried burdock strips, macaroni salad and daikon with kelp sprout salad, cold mixed spinach and green beans, and also pork miso soup with piping hot rice.

These are all the hard work of the club’s consultant cum main coach Takeda sensei, who made the dishes while taking everyone’s nutrition balance into consideration.

“Takeda-chan is awesome. Maybe he should start teaching cooking classes instead of contemporary Japanese.”

“Even though I intended for the first breakfast to be slightly more sumptuous, I seem to have made too much.....”

Takeda sensei scratched his head in slight embarrassment due to Tanaka’s praise.

“Then.....”

After confirming that everyone is present, Sawamura clapped his palms together.

“Let’s eat!”

Everyone stuck their chopsticks competitively into the dishes, and soon the dishes disappeared into everyone’s tummy. To the club members who happened to eat a lot, just eating a meal felt like exercise.

Hinata swallowed a piece of teriyaki chicken down his throat, then asked his senpais:

“When is Nekoma coming?”

“I think they have other practice matches before the one with us, so they should be arriving either today or tomorrow.”

Hearing what Sugawara just said, the other members had a “is that so?” reaction.

“That’s so good! Having a practice match schedule!”

Hinata said naively, then took a sip of the pork miso soup. Probably because he had experience long trips like this before during his junior high years, Kageyama glared at Hinata.

“It’s very tiring.”

“So what if it’s tiring?”

As Hinata makes his rebuttal, Tanaka pointed at the two of them with his chopsticks.

“Our club’s training..... is very tough!”

Seeing how Hinata and Kageyama took a deep breath upon hearing his words, Tanaka smiled slyly, then started counting with his fingers.

“We’ll start with a road run in the morning, then it’s three people to a group for serving practices, then it’s passing practices, before noon we have to finish practicing normal serves and jump serves, which amounts to three times the usual practice during club hours. After the lunch break, we do mainly free spiking, then there’s group matches, and finally a debrief session to mark the end, that’s about all.”

“We’re really going to play volleyball the whole day.....!”

Hinata’s eyes glistened, his chopsticks still holding onto a piece of fluffy tamago yaki. The people sitting beside him already knew that he had started to imagine things again, wanting to do this and that.

“If you’re that tensed up, you’re going to puke again.”

As Tanaka spoke, Sawamura hit his bald head lightly.

“We’re eating right now!”

“Yeah, that’s right!”

Seeing his senpais arguing, Hinata could not help but say:

“Wow, there’s really the feeling of being in a training camp!”

Hinata looked like a kid on an excursion, Kageyama on the other hand ticked Hinata off, saying: “This is no child’s play.” Hinata immediately had a face of discontent.

“I know that! I mean, I will definitely not lose against you!”

“In what ways?”

“In every way!”

Hinata turned his face to another side, then gobbled down his food. Holding his empty bowl, Hinata stood up.

“I want another serving!”

The sound of water boiling sounded from the kitchen as Takeda sensei prepared the tea after meal.

—

8am. All members changed into T-shirt and shorts, then sat around the shade under a tree beside the gymnasium, doing their warm-up exercises. The members shouted with energy, their voices echoing throughout the cloudless sky in May.

“one, two, three, four!”

“five, six, seven, eight!”

Hinata stared at Kageyama, who was beside him, as he did his exercises following Sawamura’s command.

“I will definitely win.....”

“What nonsense are you talking about!”

Tsukishima placed his hand above his head, the other hand pressing down against his elbow, stretching his triceps. He smiled as he looked at the full of aura duo.

“Are you guys stupid? How do you win or lose on a road run?”

“Shut up! I’ll win against you too!”

Hinata pointed at Tsukishima as he spoke. Yamaguchi spoke agitatedly as he moved his shoulders in a circular motion:

“How can Tsukki lose, when he was younger.....”

“Shut up!”

Tsukishima glared at Yamaguchi. Azumane, who was beside them, asked Tsukishima:

“..... Are you very good at running?”

“..... Please do not mind about me.”

After completing their warm-up exercises, Sawamura raised his hand.

“Alright, is everyone ready? We’re going to start running!”

“Yes!”

Just as the rest were about to start running, Hinata shouted suddenly.

“Hey..... Go!”

He gave his own order and dashed out by himself.

The other members were unable to grasp what just happened and stayed rooted to the ground, staring towards Hinata, whose back view grew smaller and smaller.

Kageyama snapped back from his daze.

“..... That idiot!”

Seeing Kageyama who had just went after Hinata, Sawamura could not help but hold his head in his hands.

“These guys.....! Everyone, let’s go!”

“Ah, yes!”

On the third of May, the first day of the Golden week, the first road run of the entire training camp began.

—

The route for the road run would first take the members past the residential area as well as Karasuno’s shopping street, then a round around the jogging path at Karasuno’s integrated sports park before finally returning to school. The whole route would take about one hour to complete.

The ground at Karasuno is uneven in height, and no matter which route they choose, there was no way they could avoid slopes or stairs.

“Uuuooohhh!”

Hinata screamed as he ran forward as fast as he could. Kageyama, who only wanted to run forward with all his might, caught up with Hinata very soon, then, he overtook Hinata.

“..... What, damn it!”

The other members ran in a single file under the shades, with Nishinoya and Tanaka trailing behind the competing Hinata and Kageyama, followed by the other members at the back.

The sound of the footsteps against the road were mixed with the messy breaths of the members. Everyone was focusing on the road run.

Hinata ran with all his might in hope of over taking Kageyama, but the gap between them did not narrow. I can't lose! I have to be in the lead no matter what.....! The sweaty duo glared at each other while clenching their teethes.

“Hurgh!”

The anxious Hinata cheered himself with a short “Hmph!”, and despite doing all these unnecessary actions, he managed to overtake Kageyama with his sheer willpower.

“Hoo.....”

Kageyama groaned. Hinata shouted after taking a deep breath:

“..... Yeah—!”

Without taking into consideration the aftermath, Hinata, after overtaking Kageyama, ran up the slope without looking at his surrounding, his face flushed.

“Damn it.....”

Kageyama frowned in frustration as he stared at Hinata's back view, who kept running forward. Just as he was going to catch up with Hinata in another 10-odd seconds, Kageyama suddenly stopped at his tracks.

“Oh?”

Hinata should be right in front of him, but Hinata was nowhere to be seen.

No matter how fast Hinata can run, he couldn't have disappeared from his

sight in such a short span of time.

“That idiot, where did he run to.....?”

The other members who were panting heavily noticed Kageyama stopping in his tracks and looking around. They asked:

“..... Hoo, hoo, hey, what are you doing? Hoo..... where’s Hinata?”

“I think, he must have ran in the wrong direction.”

“What?”

Owing to Hinata’s disappearance, the road run got suspended just 20 minutes since it started.

—

“The person missing now is Hinata..... He’ll probably not know his way back.”

Sawamura gathered everyone by the roadside. Kageyama said while feeling worried.

“What is that guy doing.....!”

“Should we tie a rope on Hinata’s body?”

Nishinoya laughed, but Tsukishima said with frustration across his face:

“He must’ve been picked up by someone and leading a comfortable life right now. Let’s ignore him.....”

“Hmm, Daichi-san is right, the person missing right now is Hinata..... well, we’ll have to look for him!”

Hearing Tanaka’s words, the other members looked at each other. Hinata is indeed a very important first year members, but since he ran out and got lost of his own accord, to be very honest, this was his just desserts.

Seeing the members at a loss of what to say, Tanaka spoke up:

“Then, how about this? We’ll treat this as a road run, we split into two groups to look for Hinata and the group to find him first can request Takeda-chan to make anything they want to eat as reward!”

Hearing Tanaka’s suggestions, the members became interested, then started

to think hard about what they want to eat.

“Although it feels more tiring than the usual road run, the reward does sound enticing.”

“..... I wonder if Takeda-chan knows how to make Tonkotsu ramen.”

“Vinegared sea pineapple.....?”

“Having strawberry shortcake at 3pm is quite the recommended choice too.”

“Please have him adjust the spiciness level with soybean paste and pepper and make a super spicy version for me.....”

Even Sugawara has started to consider the spiciness level for mapo tofu, Sawamura could only surrender.

“..... I get it, I get it. then, I'll go tell sensei too, let's go look for Hinata together.”

“Yes!”

Everyone grew energetic all of a sudden, Tanaka then raised his hand.

“Then, the first and second years in a team, whatever it is, let's go around the park first!”

“Yes!”

With Tanaka taking the lead, the first and second year members left noisily. The third years could only watch as they leave. With the remaining third years left, the surrounding suddenly grew very quiet, so much so the three of them could hear the sound of grass swaying in the wind.

Azumane, feeling lonely, mumbled to himself:

“We're the only third years left?”

“That Tanaka, all he wanted to do was to act like a senpai.....”

Standing amongst his friends of the same age, Sawamura loosened up, flashing his bitter smile. Sugawara smiled too, but then changed into a face full of energy:

“Then, we'll leave the park to those guys, all in all, let's head out to collect information!”

Sawamura and Azumane glanced at each other.

“..... Suga is very excited, huh.”

—

On the other hand, a member from Nekoma High School’s volleyball club had also gone missing.

The whole group of them had arrived at Sendai train station earlier, and had just arrived at Karasuno by bus with ease. But upon reaching the dormitory at Karasuno’s integrated sports park, the second year member Kozume Kenma suddenly disappeared.

The last to leave the bus was captain Kuroo Tetsuro. Seeing his members and their huge stack of sports bag, he asked:

“..... Hey, where’s Kenma?”

“Eh? Wasn’t he still on the bus?”

Yamamoto, another second year member, tiptoed and peeked into the bus. Kuroo spoke unhappily:

“Precisely because I was the last to leave the bus, that’s why I’m asking you guys.”

“Sorry! Hey, did you see Kenma?”

Yamamoto asked Shibayama, a first year member, who was just about to bring in their luggages into the dormitory. “Nope, sorry, didn’t see him!” Shibayama bowed in apology, saying he didn’t see Kenma.

“Can’t believe this.....”

Kuroo fished out his hand phone from his pocket and dialed Kozume’s phone number. Kozume picked up the phone almost instantly, hence Kuroo starting nagging on the phone:

“Kenma, where are you?..... Huh? I can’t understand you. Are there any landmarks or addresses around? Ah ah, okay, alright, ah, forget it, I get it, don’t leave where you’re at, okay.”

The other members turned to look at each other, from the way Kuroo

sounded, everyone could imagine Kozume's usual facial expression and voice.

Kuroo frowned as he ended the call, then gathered the members:

"I'll go look for Kenma, everyone else head in to rest first."

"We'll go too! It's faster if we split up to look for him."

Kuroo shook his head as he glanced at the first year member Inuoka.

"No need, there's no point sending a group of people to search at an unfamiliar place."

"..... Yes."

Kuroo left behind the other members, who were looking worried as they watch him leave, then headed out by himself.

The dormitory, which was a distance away from the train station, had no obvious landmarks around. The phone conversation just now revealed no useful clues as well. Without a map, how can one look for another in such an unfamiliar place? Kuroo felt really unsure.

However, he had just lost sight of Kenma as he was alighting the bus, hence Kenma could not have gone too far.

Kuroo first went to the convenience store, however, there was not a single soul in the convenience store early in the morning.

"Hmm, that would've been too easy... Eh?"

Seeing unfamiliar products on the racks of the convenience store, Kuroo at that instance realised that he was indeed at a place faraway from Tokyo.

"That guy had the nerve to walk around in an unfamiliar place alone....."

Once he got out from the convenience store, Kuroo had no idea whether to walk towards the left or right. Just then, an elementary school boy with a gaming console in his hands appeared in front of Kuroo.

"..... As the saying goes, "birds of the same feather, flock together", huh."

Kuroo mumbled to himself, then decided to follow the boy. He took a right turn once he got out of the convenience store, yeah, this is no cause for commotion, let's just treat it as a normal happening.

“Right, let’s head towards the shopping street then. Perhaps the members of the Karasuno Neighbourhood Association Team have seen him.”

Sugawara pointed towards the road leading towards the shopping street, Azumane managed a bitter smile.

“He probably went to the alumni to teach him killer moves.”

“While spouting stuff like “Hey, Go!” while doing so”

Thinking back about Hinata from just now, Sugawara and Azumane looked at each other and laughed. Sawamura stretched his body.

“..... Seriously, those guys always act without thinking, they’re really worrisome.....”

Hearing Sawamura complain, Sugawara smiled.

“However, hmm, even though they’re all problematic children, this also proved that they have the energy.”

“I do know that.”

The three of them walked towards the residential area, the sparrows that were resting by the shade beside the wall flew away.

Across the pedestrian crossing and into the shopping street, a car stopped right beside the three of them. The first to notice the car was Sugawara.

“Ah, the big brother from Uchizawa cleaning!”

Uchizawa, Karasuno High School’s alumni and the wing spiker of the Neighbourhood Association Team walked out from the car in front of the dry cleaning shop, his hands full of bags and bags of clothes.

“Hmm?”

Upon seeing the members of the volleyball club, Uchizawa placed the clothes back into the car and said:

“Oh, it’s you guys? Why are you all here at this timing?”

“We started our training camp yesterday.

“Ah, I see! You guys must win against Nekoma..... right, I’ll give you guys your discount, so bring all your uniforms here for washing. I’ll wash it clean for all of you!”

“I’ll tell that to the club manager!”

“That girl’s cute..... if only we had a female manager like her back then..... Damn it! You! Not only are you in the spotlight, you keep a mustache as well, bastard!”

Unsure how serious Uchizawa was, he poked Azumane in his chin while looking frustrated.

“O-Ow, that’s painful.....”

“Ey..... Actually, the members in our club.....”

Sugawara intervened, then told Uchizawa about Hinata’s disappearance.

“..... Oh, he went missing. Hmm, that little guy is too active, Ah, speaking of which, I’m not sure if this relevant.....”

Uchizawa looked left and right, then, as if afraid to let others hear him, he lowered his voice as he spoke. Sawamura and the others went in closer.

“I heard that on this shopping street, there’s this alley where if you walk into by accident, you’ll never get back out.....”

“Argh!”

Seeing Azumane take a step back in shock, Uchizawa smiled to himself.

“I lied, it’s all fake, it’s all a joke! If I’m out for delivery, I’ll keep a lookout for you guys!”

“Sorry to trouble you despite you being so busy.....”

The three of them bowed together. Uchizawa spoke again:

“Hmm, speaking of that kid, how should I put it, I feel he’s going to end up at some weird place.”

“..... Eh?”

Sawamura asked. Uchizawa smiled slyly:

“About that, didn’t that guy always jump to unexpected positions during matches? I mean that kind of weird place.”

“Oh, oh.....”

Thinking back about Hinata’s actions during matches, Sugawara and Azumane, both of whom had prior experience competing against him in matches, nodded in agreement. True enough, Hinata would always appear at the most unexpected of positions.

“I think he’ll appear at those kind of places unknowingly! Alright, good luck to your training camp!”

Uchizawa picked up the clothes once again, then waved to the three members as he walked into the shop.

Posters with words such as “The changing of seasons has arrived!” and “memory dry cleaning method arrives” were pasted onto the glass windows, the three members then disappeared on the other side of the glass window.

—

The morning sun looked as if it was reminding people of the rising temperature as the day goes. The first and second year members, who were running along the jogging track at the sports park, ran past an old couple brisk walking as well as a mother and her son who were walking their dog while searching for Hinata. Nishinoya looked at Tanaka, who was running beside him.

“The most important thing when looking for someone..... would be character profiling.”

“W-What is that? Noya-san.”

“As long as we know the kind of person Hinata is, we’ll be able to deduce where he’ll go to. Just blindly searching for him like this makes no sense.”

The other members who heard them all exclaimed with a “Oh.....!” sound.

“He must’ve learnt it from watching television.....”

Ennoshita, who was running right behind them, mumbled to himself. Tanaka turned around and shouted:

“It doesn’t matter, right? Let’s not bother too much already, quick, think about it. Hey, Ennoshita, what kind of a person is Hinata?”

“Eh? Hmm, passionate?”

Ennoshita thought for a while with the question thrown at him suddenly. Kageyama, who was running behind him silently, threw out two words painfully:

“Idiot, a pathetic fellow.”

“Shortie.”

Tsukishima, finding it interesting, continued with the topic, but Nishinoya rushed towards him, agitated.

“Shut up!”

“I’m talking about Hinata.....”

The second year members Kinoshita and Narita said as they ran:

“I think he’s someone who can practice at anytime, anywhere.”

“Hmm, my impression of him..... him puking?”

All the members nodded in agreement. At the same time, their speed became slower and slower.

The heavy expression on each of the members’ faces juxtaposed against the greenery in the surrounding.

Nishinoya picked himself up again and said:

“Alright, that’s about enough, listen carefully, let’s think about it. After combining all of these, where do you guys think Hinata would go to.....?”

“We wouldn’t know if you asked us.....”

The members maintained their silence until Tsukishima spoke up from behind:

“..... Since he lost his way, there wouldn’t be anything to do with Hinata’s personality or thinking, then.”

“Oh.....”

Nishinoya kept silent for a while while Tanaka suddenly stopped in his tracks. The other members, worried that they may walk into Tanaka, stopped as well.

Tanaka said as he looked at everyone:

“..... If that’s the case, let’s find something Hinata likes to attract his attention, how’s that?”

“Oh, that sounds interesting! You’re awesome, Ryuu!”

Tanaka smiled in embarrassment from getting praised by Nishinoya. Kageyama, who had kept a poker face throughout, also spoke in a low, calming voice:

“That guy is a naïve fool, he may just fall into our trap easily.....”

Kinoshita and Narita continued.

“If we can find him we’ll get to eat delicious food, so let’s all work hard.”

“That’s right! But, what does Hinata like?”

“Hmm..... that would be volleyball.”

Hearing Ennoshita’s words, Tanaka turned around and shouted:

“That’s it! Alright, everyone shout loud enough so that Hinata can hear, at the same time practice the various volleyball actions to attract his attention! This plan shall henceforth be known as “summoning Hinata”!”

“S-Summoning Hinata?”

Hearing the weird name of the plan, all the other members stumbled backwards.

—

The young boy had not noticed Kuroo following him from behind. He then walked towards a small gaming centre by the corner of the shopping street. Then, he stood rooted in front of the display cabinet of the centre, which had yet to open.

Seeing the way the young boy stared at the gaming console on display, Kuroo felt as though he had seen Kenma.

“Kenma might be staring at some other gaming centre too... no, perhaps he got scouted by a salon to become a hair model? His pudding had might just attract the eyes of hairstylists..... but looking at the time now, I don’t think it’s

likely?”

Kuroo took out his phone to check the time, then suddenly looked up.

“Hmm..... is there any local ceremonies taking place right now?”

He felt as though as heard some shouts and cheers from a distance, hence he looked around, hoping to find the sound source, but probably due to the wind or the topography of this place, he could not decide where the sound came from.

Kuroo’s styled up hair swayed in the wind.

Although he was a bit concerned about the noise, he decided that the most important thing to do now is to find Kenma, and they have to hurry—they have a practice match with Tsukinokizawa High School later on in the afternoon.

—

“A weird place, huh.....”

In between a series of shops at the shopping street stood a narrow and dim alley. Azumane lifted the cover of a trash bin in the alley and shouted in it:

“Hey, Hinata!”

“He can’t be inside.”

Sugawara laughed, but Sawamura, who was standing behind them, starting speaking with a serious expression:

“If he were really at those places..... That would be trouble, stop looking inside.”

“T-That’s true.....”

Azumane was halted by Sawamura’s aura, he then placed the cover back onto the trash bin.

Once the shutters were lifted, the shopping street in the early morning had an entirely different feel than during the day or evening. The three of them felt surprised as they walked along the street while looking for Hinata. A few customers were queuing in front of the fast food restaurant, waiting to buy the items on the breakfast special menu. On the other side the super mart was just about to open its door, its employees arranging the items on sale outside the

shop.

“Why? Is everyone here to buy stuff?”

The guy pushing a trolley full of card boxes while walking out of Shimada mart is, like Uchizawa of Uchizawa cleaning, an alumni of the Karasuno High School volleyball club cum wing spiker of the Neighbourhood Association Team, Shimada Makoto.

“Ah, good morning!”

“Sorry, but we’ll only be open after a while.”

“No, actually.....”

Sawamura told Shimada how Hinata went missing briefly, as well as them meeting Uchizawa earlier on.

“..... At a weird place, huh, hahaha, that does sound like what Uchizawa-san would say. Right, if that’s the case, actually there’s this alley on the shopping street where you can’t get out once you enter.....”

“Uh, we heard that already.”

Sawamura reported truthfully. Sugawara and Azumane nodded in agreement.

“.....What, to think Uchizawa spoke of it first. Then to be honest, I think the “weird place” would be the “heartbreak hill” then.”

Shimada grabbed onto his apron tightly, and on his apron was a picture of the mart’s logo.

“The slope heading towards Yukigaoka is very steep, and although it’s not very long, because it takes a lot of energy to climb, my legs give way just half way up the slope. It’s really tough there, I didn’t want to climb it a second time.....”

Seeing Shimada’s nearly puking face, Sawamura and the others felt his fatigue being passed onto them.

“Uh, do you go there for road run, Shimada senpai?”

Sugawara asked.

“Nope, previously I had a bit too much to drink at my friend’s house, and in my drunken state I walked up the slope and back home at night..... why did I do such

a thing, alcohol is indeed a fearsome thing.....”

“Ah, oh.....”

The three members nodded with an amusing look on their faces. Hearing what Shimada said, Sawamura and Azumane both lowered their head and looked at each other.

“The “heartbreak hill”, is it.”

“It should be tough to climb.”

However, Sugawara was all bright-eyed:

“I know! You guys don’t want to go, right! But, if we can find Hinata there..... we would get to eat super spicy mapo tofu!”

“Eh, what? I don’t want to eat that!”

“Ey, I mean, I’ll eat the super spicy one, the rest of you can eat the normal spicy one!”

“Suga, I’ve been thinking how you were so energetic throughout, so it’s all for food.....”

“No, that’s no true. I’m genuinely worried about Hinata! However, to my surprise, Takeda sensei can really cook, so I do look forward to my mapo tofu.....”

The three of them talked nonstop standing beside the super mart. Shimada said:

“I have no idea what you guys are planning..... but we do sell chilli and garlic inside, if you guys need the ingredients, do come to us!”

Then, Shimada waved as he walked back into the mart.

—

“.....Hoo, hoo, whew, w-what is with this slope.....”

Sawamura groaned as he looked towards the peak of the slope, which was still quite a distance away. The third years have lost to Sugawara’s craving for his super spicy mapo tofu. In order to look for Hinata, the three of them started climbing up the “heartbreak hill”.

“I-I heard..... It gets more tiring near Yukigaoka.”

“That Hinata..... he couldn’t have been cycling up this hill every day to get to school, right.....”

“..... How can it be.”

The sun shone relentlessly on the road. The weather forecast had predicted the first day of the Golden week to be a bright, sunny day. On a cooling yet non-humid day, everybody’s mood would have been great. If only they didn’t have to climb up this annoying slope, what a great day it would have been.

“This is so much more tiring than the usual road run.....”

Sawamura smiled bitterly in between heavy breaths. But it was highly credible that Hinata would be found in weird places as Uchizawa suggested. Besides, the fact that this slope leads to where Hinata’s house is at made Sawamura all the more convinced.

“..... W-Wait a minute, Daichi, rest.....”

“Hey, Asahi, we’re reaching the peak soon, let’s try reaching there first!”

“But, this steep slope..... is really difficult to climb!”

Sugawara looked at the sky, and in the bushes near the peak of the slope, a shadow moved suddenly.

“Eh?”

Sugawara took a closer look, but there were no more movements in the bushes. Sugawara called onto the others.

“..... Something was moving up there!”

“Is it Hinata!”

Azumane asked while running from behind. Sugawara nodded slightly.

“..... It probably is.”

“Alright, let’s go!”

Under Sawamura’s command, the three of them squeezed out the last of their energy and ran up the slope with heavy footsteps. The missing Hinata might just

be at the peak of the slope.

—

“Have you been waiting long?”

Another boy appeared on the street. The young boy who was squatting in front of the gaming centre playing with his gaming console, together with Kuroo, who was leaning against the railings, looked up at the same time.

It appeared that both of them had promised to meet each other. The boy shut down his gaming console immediately and ran towards the other boy.

“I waited for a long time! But I received three crystals, they’ve finished evolving, so it’s fine!”

“that’s great! If I were to play with my gaming console outside, my mum would get so angry. I mean, everyone else is playing too, there was also this delinquent with golden hair and wearing red sportswear playing with his gaming console at the empty ground awhile ago.”

“Or else you could just say, since you could only play at home, you want to buy a deluxe gundam figure.”

“That’s right!”

Hearing the children’s conversation, Kuroo’s eyes beamed.

“..... should be at the empty ground over there.”

Kuroo removed his jacket, then crossed the road in order to confirm whether the

“delinquent with golden hair and wearing red sportswear playing with his gaming console at the empty ground” was indeed Kenma.

“..... Things such as playing with gaming consoles, he could play with them all he wants when he grows up, why now.....”

Kuroo walked past the residential area, then walked towards where the young boys pointed to just now. He walked out to the T-section of the road, then looked towards the front of the intersection.

“Found you.”

Although unsure if that was the empty ground, whatever it is, Kenma, who was wearing his red sportswear, was indeed sitting on the ledge alongside the road. He didn't appear to be playing with his gaming console like that the young boys said, instead, he appeared to be talking with another high school student who looked like he was asking for directions.

"I can't believe he's really here....."

Kuroo, speechless, called upon Kenma.

"Kenma!"

Kenma noticed Kuroo by the side.

"Ah, Kuroo,"

"..... Seriously."

Kuroo heaved a sigh of relief as Kenma walked towards him. Kenma then said: "see you again, Shouyou", and waved at the guy he was talking to just now. Kuroo had been busy looking for Kenma, yet the person himself looked relaxed the whole time.

"Don't go wandering off by yourself."

"Sorry."

The two of them, clad in Nekoma High School's volleyball club sportswear, walked back to their dormitory located beside Karasuno's integrated sports park.

—

On the other hand, the members of Karasuno Men's volleyball club had yet to find their missing member.

The grass emitted its smell while getting stepped on by sport shoes, the three third year students, who finally reached the peak, walked into the grass patch beside the road.

"Hey, Hinata, are you here?"

They called his name while walking forward. Suddenly, a noise sounded from beside their feet, all three of them looked towards the same direction.

"Hinata.....?"

“Is that you?”

The bushes started moving.

But what peeked out from the tall bushes cautiously was not Hinata, but a pair of white and black stray cats.

“Meow.”

“..... What? Cats!”

Loosening up from the tension, Azumane collapsed on the floor in relief. The friendly cats approached him.

“Oh, hey hey~”

Sugawara looked on as the cats continued licking on Azumane’s mustache, then he spoke:

“But, if Hinata wasn’t here, then where could he be?”

“That.....”

Sawamura looked up at the sky helplessly. The sakura petals flew around in the cloudless sky, so beautiful Sawamura had a bad feeling about it.

After thinking through and as if he thought of something, he looked around his surrounding, and up on the hills with luscious greenery around on an early summer, a series of chants and cheers can be heard.

“..... Hmm?”

Sugawara, seeing Sawamura looking around, noticed the sound as well.

“..... Ah, I think I heard something too.”

Azumane heard it too. The sound from the other side of the road probably got carried here by the wind.

“The three of them returned to the road. They heard a rhythmic sound coming from below the slope.

Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey! Hey!

Come on! Come on!

“..... W-What, is that noise?”

“I have a bad feeling about this.....”

The road glistened under the hot sun, and as expected, what appeared in front of them were the year one and year two members, jumping and shouting at the same time. Their voices closed in.

“Hey! Hey! Hey!”

Tanaka jumped around while Nishinoya rolled onto the road. The other members followed behind, everyone dancing what looked like a self-composed dance, then climbed up the slope together. Tsukishima, on the other hand, ran by himself on the other side of the road, his expression unhappy.

Sawamura, who was dumbfounded, stood in the middle of the road while asking expressionlessly:

“Hey, Suga, what are these guys doing?”

“..... Looks like a ceremony? Like praying for rain?”

“Praying for Hinata’s whereabouts.....”

Azumane mumbled to himself while hugging the trembling cats, as if protecting them. Sawamura shouted at the group of noisy members.

“..... What are you guys doing?”

“Ah, Daichi-san!”

Nishinoya ran towards him with a smile on his face despite panting. When he finally reached the peak, Nishinoya spoke confidently:

“We are summoning Hinata!”

“What?”

Sawamura’s expression was twisted. Tanaka ran towards him while wiping off his sweat.

“We’re using practice as a bait to attract Hinata’s attention! Come, let’s dance together, Daichi-san! Come on! Come on!”

Upon hearing what Tanaka said, Sawamura then realised that they were not dancing, but combining the different volleyball actions together.... Even so, Sawamura didn’t want to join them.

“..... I understand that you guys are dancing to attract Hinata’s attention, but why on this steep slope?”

Hearing what Sawamura said, Kageyama, who was doing his blocking pose, answered seriously:

“Because that guy will never choose an easy path!”

“Hmm, that’s true.....”

Feeling exhausted, Sawamura walked away from the members, his body swaying left and right. But at the same time, he realised how nonsensical it was to actually come to this “weird place Hinata might be at” place with Sugawara and Azumane.

“I’m actually on the same level as these guys.....”

“Eh? What is it, Daichi-san?”

Just as Tanaka was asking, the cats in Azumane’s arms suddenly jumped.

“W-What is it?”

The scared members turned around, then saw the cats meowing at Kageyama in a hostile manner, their furs standing up. The cats looked as if they’ve seen their archenemy, their bodies trembling while they stare at him, as if ready to pounce on him anytime.

“W-Why.....”

Seeing Kageyama slightly taken aback, Sugawara asked:

“Kageyama, have you done anything to the cats?”

“I didn’t do anything!”

Seeing Kageyama’s flustered face, Tsukishima laughed.

“Some people just get disliked by animals for no particular reason.”

“Damn it.....” Kageyama glared at Tsukishima, but the cats only became fiercer. Their tails wagged faster, their sharp teeth showing.

“Hurgh!”

Seeing Kageyama stepping back cautiously against the ferocious cats,

Sawamura mumbled to himself:

“Hinata might have returned to school, let’s head back and see.....”

“Yes!”

Although everyone was already very tired, they still answered in unison.

“The road run must continue, so, let’s run back.”

“..... Ah, yes.”

The members headed downhill with not much energy left, and behind them countless sakura petals danced in the wind.

—

Speaking of which, even though it was the golden week, many other clubs in Karasuno High School continued with their training. The field and gymnasiums with the murmurs of the students, the music room with the singing voices of the students.

A voice came from within the second gymnasium occupied by the male’s volleyball club.

“..... Spinning serve!”

Hinata leaned his body forward as he struck a pose on the cold floor. The club manager Shimizu looked at him expressionlessly, then walked into the equipment room without saying anything.

“Hehehe.....”

Hinata smiled contently, but turned around when he felt people appearing behind him

“Hmm?”

The other members who have just finished their road run stood against the sun at the entrance of the gymnasium. Because they stood against the sun, Hinata could not see their faces.

“Welcome back!”

Hinata was about to run towards them with a face of smile when Kageyama

shouted at him.

“Hinata! You idiot! Just where have you been at what have you done?”

Hinata was slightly taken aback by Kageyama sudden outburst, but then grasped his reason for his anger almost immediately, his face turning pale. That’s right, he had separated himself from the others during the road run, hence.....

“Ah! Uh..... There was this guy in red sportswear who lost his way.....”

“You’re the one who got lost!”

“T-That’s true..... But because Kenma is a volleyball player too, so I stayed and chatted with him.....”

“Who’s that?”

Hinata’s excuse didn’t help him at all, and in that moment he was cornered. Kageyama became even more angry hearing his excuse, Tanaka and Nishinoya clenched their fist while making a face.

“Shouyou did practice by himself after all?”

“As expected of a character profiling expert!”

The third years, who were standing behind them, kept their head down due to fatigue.

“..... I can’t believe he’d really end up at this annoying place.”

“Yeah.”

“No super spicy mapo tofu.....?”

Where did he get his energy from after such a long run? Kageyama, ignoring his senpais, continued screaming.

“..... I don’t care whether you “must win” or whatever, you’ll run at the furthest end!”

“What!”

“Shut up! Don’t you dare run in front!”

“I don’t want to!”

“You’ll just go missing again! Don’t create trouble for me!”

The other members separated the two of them to stop their quarrel.

3rd May, 10 am.

Be it the training camp or today's training items, everything has just begun.

-end-

Sugawara's decision (re-upload)

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May 3rd

8pm

May 3rd, 8 pm. In the main hall of the dormitory—

After a day of practice, Sugawara returned to the dormitory, then called upon coach Ukai, who was near the sofa and vending machine in the main hall.

“Coach Ukai.”

“What’s up?”

Ukai turned around as he opened the can of coffee he just bought. The other members have already returned to the resting room, and only the both of them are left.

Sugawara clenched his fists:

“To us third years, there’s no such thing as “next year”.”

“!”

Sugawara could tell the stiffness on the coach’s expression.

“Hence, we try our best to win a few more matches and advance further into the competition. If Kageyama has more ability than I do to win the matches, I think you should choose Kageyama without hesitation.”

Sugawara spoke with clarity while looking straight into Ukai’s eyes.

Everything could be traced back to the day before—

—

May 2nd, 7am. At the second gymnasium—

The morning practice on the day before the start of Golden week started with warm up exercises as per normal. Sugawara stretched his shoulders, ankles and wrists slowly, then stretched his thighs while lying down.

He felt the slight vibration on the cold floor with his head lying on it. The first years have probably just pushed the basket of balls in from the equipment room. Sugawara lied down on the floor while stretching his quadriceps muscles on his thighs, his eyes fixed on the ceiling, the morning sun rays shining in through the windows.

It's the usual scene during morning practices.

"The training camp starts today, huh."

Sugawara had just meant for it to be a casual remark, before realising that this would be the last training camp before the Inter high competition.

He sat up slowly and saw his first year kouhais fooling around as usual, then managed a bitter smile. Just then, the sound of the whistle sounded throughout, and everyone gathered around while running in small steps. Sugawara stood up and ran towards everyone too.

After the warm up exercises and passing practices, Sugawara and Kageyama stood by the side of the net to practice spiking with the others. The timing for an easy spike, the height of the toss—Sugawara took all of them into consideration while tossing the balls to the spikers. The sound of the balls hitting on the floor sounded in rhythm.

Tanaka, who was screaming, together with the serious-faced Sawamura, rushed forward and jumped in to spike the balls. Sugawara then took a glance at Azumane.

Matching with the ball that was thrown up, Sugawara raised the ball to a position further away and higher from the net.

Azumane jumped with vigor, his body blocking the sun rays from the windows. His raised hand met with the ball.

Thunk!

The gymnasium vibrated.

"..... Woah."

Seeing such a powerful spike, coach Ukai, who was standing outside the court, murmured to himself. Sugawara asked as he looked up:

“Is something wrong?”

“Uh, just continue.....”

Before even finishing his sentence, Ukai turned his attention to behind Sugawara. Sugawara turned around too.

The sound of the shoes against the floor, followed by a creak on the floor.

Hinata landed on the floor behind Sugawara, then shouted “Hurgh!”

The speed of Kageyama and Hinata’s freak quick was so fast no one could take their eyes off of it, including Sugawara, who stood rooted in shock.

Then, he took a glance at coach Ukai. At a glance, he looked to be analysing their moves calmly, but Sugawara could feel him trying to suppress his excitement.

He thought he’d gotten used to it. But seeing someone looking at both Kageyama and Hinata’s performance with such surprised expression at such close distance, Sugawara still felt the pain, as if something was stuck in his throat. He wished he could attract the people’s attention like them as well, but that’s all just wishful thinking on his part.

“Uh, Sugawara senpai..... can I have a go at it?”

Yamaguchi asked Sugawara cautiously, whose mind was wandering elsewhere.

“Ah, sorry!”

Sugawara smiled, then tossed the ball to Yamaguchi wholeheartedly.

—

The homeroom period before class has just ended, and once the teacher left the classroom and walked out to the corridor, the atmosphere in the classroom of year 3 class 4 became lively all of a sudden. The Golden week begins tomorrow, and everyone in class sounded livelier than usual, their laughs continuous.

Once summer break began, everyone would have to start preparing for the examinations, and the reason why the classroom is so lively now is probably because this would be their last chance to play and have fun.

And in the same classroom, Sugawara grew excited too, but for a different reason.

The training camp will start at night, and the lesson hours ended before he knew it, with him unable to remember much of the contents of the classes today. Thinking about how Hinata would jump around in front of him while exclaiming “Training camp! Training camp!”, Sugawara could not help but smile to himself. Sawamura, who was in the same class as him, pointed to the corridor and said:

“Suga, I think we should leave soon.”

“Yeah.”

The captain and vice-captain of Karasuno’s male volleyball club left for the second gymnasium. Those preparing to head home, those rushing to their club activities—the high school students, each with a different footstep and expression, walked past each other at the front porch.

“Oh, you guys from the volleyball club, good luck with your club activities!”

“Bye! And look forward to the souvenirs from my trip!”

Their classmates waved at the both of them.

“Yeah, goodbye.”

“Thanks!”

Sawamura and Sugawara waved at their classmates as well.

The school still felt warm and bright even after 4pm. But walking alongside Sawamura, Sugawara felt himself feeling heavy.

He should be looking forward to the training camp.....

“Daichi, can I ask you something.....”

He opened up and asked.

“Hmm, what is it?”

“..... Ah, nothing.”

“What happened?”

“Um, it’s just.....”

What exactly did he wanted to tell Sawamura? What did he expect to hear from Sawamura? Sugawara was at a loss for words in that instant, carefully thinking how exactly he should put things across.

“..... The practice match, we have to win it.”

“Yeah.”

Sawamura replied as he continued walking. His expression made him seem like a dependable captain.

Logically speaking, both of them had been co-leading the club since the senpais retired in autumn last year, but unconsciously, Sugawara felt as if Sawamura had advanced a few steps before him.

No, it was just he himself who remained at the spot.....

As they climbed up the stairs, Sawamura turned around and smiled at him.

“Alright, let’s begin practice.”

—

“Serving, receiving!”

Under Sawamura’s command, the club members split themselves up into two groups, spreading themselves around the court. Kageyama took a glance at Sugawara, then ran up towards him.

“I’ll head in first.”

Sugawara nodded at Kageyama, who had came to greet him, then walked out of the court.

The practice began. The murmurs of the members, the sound of receiving the balls and the sound of the shoes rubbing against the floor sounded throughout the gymnasium. Sugawara thought of the plasters that will soon run out while verifying the other members’ conditions. He needed to find a time to buy them.....

At that moment, with a loud “thunk!”, Hinata’s scream sounded.

“So painful—!”

The other members stopped at what they were doing and turned to look at Hinata.

He must have hurt himself while trying too hard to receive the ball, or did he slip due to sweat on the floor? Hinata held onto his forehead while squatting near the wall.

“Hey, are you okay?”

Everyone stopped their practice and ran towards Hinata.

“S-Sorry, I’m okay.”

Hinata stood up as he rubbed his swollen forehead, then mumbled “Eh? Eh?” as he looked around.

“What is it? Did you knock yourself too hard?”

“Do you want to go to the nurse’s?”

“No need, I just felt something cooling.....”

Hinata twisted his body, then screamed as he looked behind.

“..... Woah!”

Probably torn while he fell, or perhaps it was already damaged prior, Hinata’s shorts split near his buttocks.

“Wha, Ooh.....”

Hinata squatted on the floor, his faced fully red. Nishinoya stretched his hand towards Hinata.

“There’s nothing to be embarrassed about, this is the wound of honor!”

“W-wound, of honor? That sounds slightly cool.....”

Hinata grew more energetic suddenly. Tsukishima said, slightly annoyed:

“Nah, it’s still very embarrassing, your underwear is showing.....”

“Idiot, don’t look at it!”

“Who would want to.....”

Hinata covered his butt as he ran to change his shorts.

“Don’t catch a cold!”

“Don’t fall down and tear your underwear!”

Just as everyone was laughing and making fun of him, Tsukishima noticed Yamaguchi who was looking at Hinata’s back quietly.

“What is it?”

“Eh? Ah..... That must be very embarrassing.”

Yamaguchi looked up at Tsukishima, slightly flustered. Nishinoya’s voice sounded throughout the gymnasium, almost drowning Yamaguchi’s voice.

“That’s great, Shouyou! Your drive is your strength! Drive! Drive!”

Yamaguchi grew silent from feeling down.

“Alright, everyone return!”

Under Sawamura’s command, everyone started moving once again. Sugawara, who had been looking at Yamaguchi and Nishinoya from outside the court, ran into the court as well.

He thought to himself, just what is his own strength.....

—

“Hinata!”

Once practice was over, Sugawara called upon Hinata, who was just about to return to the club room.

“Want to go buy a new sportswear?”

“Eh? Now?”

Hinata, who sweat way more than everyone else, opened his eyes wide in surprise.

“Hinata, your knee pads are already broken too, right? I need to get some plasters before the training camp starts tomorrow, so I was thinking we can go together.”

Hearing what Sugawara just said, Hinata looked as if he had just noticed the state of his knee pads. He looked at them with mixed feelings.

“That’s true.....”

Probably because he exercises way more than the others, Hinata’s knee pads were already very damaged. God knows when they will tear just like his shorts today.

“Leave your belongings at the dormitory, if we leave now, we’ll probably be able to return before dinnertime.”

“Osu!”

Yamaguchi heard their conversation while walking behind them. He looked at his own knee pads that were newly bought in April, and although it was a bit dirty, it looked and felt like new.

He too, joined the club a month ago, but why exactly was there such a huge difference between him and Hinata?

Seeing Yamaguchi lower his head, Tsukishima looked slightly annoyed.

“What is it?”

“Ah..... no, nothing.”

“..... Really?”

Tsukishima turned his face around, then left the gymnasium without asking any further.

Yamaguchi stood at where he was until Sawamura called him.

“Hey, I’m closing the doors, if we stay till too late, we’ll get reprimanded by the supervisor again.”

“Ah, yes, sorry!”

Yamaguchi left the gymnasium hurriedly.

—

The sky turned dark blue as the sun set gradually. Sugawara and Hinata, who had left their belongings in the dormitory, boarded a bus at the bus stop in front of the school. The sports equipment store at the shopping street should still be open.

Hinata, who looked and acted like an excited child at the dormitory now looked

nervous as he stared out the window. The swelling on his forehead was still very obvious. His youthful feature made Sugawara realise how slightly a month ago, Hinata was but a Junior high student.

“How is it? Having been in our club for over a month.”

Hinata replied, slightly surprised:

“Eh? Ah, that’s true, it’s only been a month.....”

“Hahaha, after the camp we’ll have a practice match, and very soon it’ll be the preliminaries for the Inter high competition..... The year will past by very fast, and before you know it, you’re already in your third year.”

“Eh? I’m so busy everyday I can’t even think of what will happen tomorrow.....”

Hinata opened his mouth wide in surprise, Sugawara could not help but smile as he looked at him.

How was I like when I was in my first year? I didn’t even had the chance to join any practice matches, and probably didn’t had the chance to speak to a senpai like Hinata right now.

If a third year wanted to speak to me, it’ll probably be them nagging at stuff, which would probably be very nerve-wrecking..... especially during the training camp, where I’ll have to undergo strict training until very late at night, then I’ll be forced to do unreasonable stuff..... inviting Hinata out like this must have scared him too. Sugawara felt a bit guilty.

Hinata said by the window, and from the window they could already see the cars’ front lights passing them by, the sky turning darker and darker. Just as Sugawara was going to tell Hinata he only invited him out to accompany himself on the trip with no other intentions, Hinata suddenly mumbled to himself as he looked out the window:

“A public bus, huh.....”

“Hmm? What about it?”

Sugawara asked. Hinata, with a rare serious expression on his face, said:

“When you sit on a bus, you’ll not notice how fast it’s actually going it, but if

you're chasing it from behind, you'll realise just how fast it's going at."

"Ah, what?"

Sugawara didn't quite get what Hinata was saying, but it looked as if Hinata didn't feel any pressure sitting beside him.

Sugawara, slightly relieved, said:

"We're alighting at the next stop."

"Osu!"

Sugawara pressed on the bell, and the bell sounded amidst the bus full of passengers.

—

"Woah....."

Walking into the store that was about to close anytime soon, Hinata stood in front of a row of high functionality sportswear, looking amazed.

"Hey, what is it?"

"So many different kinds of sportswear, I have no idea which one to pick....."

"Haha, is that so."

Sugawara picked up a few different sportswear from the shelf, and pulled on them gently as he said:

"You move around a lot, so a stretchable sportswear should be better, it'll be trouble if it tears again. As for its absorbency and quick dry ability, I think it's all about the same."

"..... A-absorbency?"

"Recently there're those that can aid muscular action too, I heard that for professional athletes, they'll only wear a sportswear only once even for those that costs over 10,000 yen. If the sportswear loosen, its function would decrease, so the athletes will wear new ones all the time, that's incredible isn't it."

".....10,000 yen?"

Hinata's hands trembled. He quickly returned the sportswear he was holding on back to the shelf.

"Uh, you don't have to buy such expensive ones!"

"Absorbency, 10,000 yen....."

"H-Hinata?"

Sugawara dragged the mumbling Hinata to another shelf.

"Look, this! This is the same pair as the shorts you tore today, see!"

"10,000, yen.....?"

"No, this is 3000 yen! You can afford it!"

Sugawara stuffed the shorts into Hinata's trembling hands. Hinata's movements were awkward as he mumbled:

"But, the 10,000 yen ones are definitely better those at 3000 yen would only be on the 3000 yen's level....."

"If you're going to think about it this way there'll be no end to it! If you get too hung up with the equipments, it'll be an obsession of no return!"

"10,000 yen....."

"It's all my fault! Alright, take this quick, let's get your knee pads!"

Sugawara dragged the soulless Hinata onto another shelf displaying knee pads.

"How much would a good knee pad cost....."

"This is good enough, it's on a 10% discount, so it costs only 803 yen! Alright, go pay for them!"

—

By the time they left the store, the sky had already turned dark. The shop signs for the convenience store and fast food restaurants were so bright it tempted the two of them to walk in, but the two ultimately decided against it.

While waiting for the bus at the bus stop, Hinata bowed in apology towards Sugawara.

"Sorry, I was a bit tempted....."

“Hahaha, it’s fine, I am in the wrong too.”

“..... How should I put it, I just don’t want to lose to Kageyama.”

“Eh?”

Hearing his unexpected reply, Sugawara grew a bit hesitant. He felt as though Hinata had seen through what he was thinking, but that of course, was impossible.

Hinata didn’t notice Sugawara’s hesitation, and continued saying:

“Although I don’t know if buying expensive sports gear like those would make be become more like Kageyama..... Right, didn’t senpai say it before too? Although that guy used to be the strongest enemy, he’s now the strongest ally.”

“..... Yeah.”

“But under comparison, how should I say it, I still can’t become an actual attack force like that fellow, without him, I am of no use at all.....”

A passing car’s orange head lights shone onto Hinata’s worried face.

“..... That’s not true, you’re great, you’re very important to us!”

This is no consolation, but Sugawara’s real thoughts. But Hinata shook his head immediately.

“No, I’m very sure, without Kageyama I’ll be of no use, but I still want to play in matches.....”

“Eh?”

“Although I’m perplexed by the fact that I can’t stand alone, away from Kageyama, but even if I have to team up with that guy, I still want to be on the matches, I, want to stand on the court.”

Hinata’s side face revealed an unprecedented seriousness, surprising Sugawara. Sugawara slowly opened his mouth, as if thinking carefully of what to say.

“..... I think that Karasuno has a very good team this year.”

Hinata looked up at Sugawara silently, Sugawara continued:

“I look forward to the team this year, not a certain someone.”

“A team you look forward to?”

“Yeah, you’re a member of the team too, so, this has nothing to do with Kageyama, as a member of the team, I hope you can become more confident.”

“..... Yes!”

Hinata looked down, slightly embarrassed, then looked towards the road again when the engine sounded. The bus plate signaling its destination became within sight.

“Ah, the bus is here!”

“I think we should still be able to make it to dinnertime.”

“Wonder what Takeda sensei would cook for us?”

Both of them smiled at each other. The bus slowly stopped in front of them, then opened its door.

—

After everyone finished eating their dinner, the second and third year students went on to take a bath. Because the bathroom could not accommodate everyone at the same time, the members had to take turns to bathe. The first years were also put in charge of cleaning the bathroom at the end of every day.

Sugawara sat on a plastic stool, then turned on the shower head. Steam filled the bathroom.

Washing himself with warm water, Sugawara’s mind became clearer, his head cooling down from exhaustion previously.

“Hoo.....”

Sugawara ran his fingers through his wet hair, then heard a laughter coming from behind. He turned around and saw Nishinoya, who had his towel on his hair, laughing with his hands on his tummy.

“Ryu! Surely you don’t need to use shampoo!”

Tanaka, who was busy rubbing the shampoo onto his head, retaliated unhappily.

“My scalp is sensitive, alright? We’re talking about my scalp! Ah, so painful! The bubbles got into my eyes! Bubbles!”

Tanaka hurriedly tried to wash the bubbles off his eyes, but because the water pressure from the shower head was too strong, Tanaka lost his grip on the shower head, causing the water to spray everywhere. The bathroom was instantly filled with whining.

“Won’t the bubbles come in my way then?”

“Hey, don’t be like this.”

“M-My eyes!”

“Use cold water to rinse them away, cold water.”

“W-Where’s the tap..... is it here?”

“Hey, the water splashed onto me!”

Tanaka rinsed his eyes continuously.

“Oh oh oh oh! I’m revived! I thought I was going to die!”

Finishing what he said, Tanaka opened his eyes and looked up. Azumane, who was right in front of him, was doing hair treatment with his hands.....

“..... Wo-ah.”

“Eh?”

Azumane asked as he combed through his long hair with his fingers. Tanaka’s facial muscles twitched.

“Uh, S-sorry I was a bit.....”

“Hey, Asahi, Tanaka’s mentality has been met with a huge blow!”

“W-What?”

Sawamura spoke directly:

“Are you a girl with mustache?”

“H-How can you say that.....”

Azumane rinsed off the hair conditioner teary-eyed, then walked towards the washing area, his huge body submerged in the bath.

“Asahi senpai! I don’t think you’re a girl with mustache! I was just slightly

taken aback.....!”

“Asahi, the first years are still waiting to take their baths, don’t stay in the bath for too long!”

“Daichi-san, I think he can’t hear you.”

Nishinoya poked at the submerged Azumane. Sawamura said, irritated:

“Up to you then, but get out before the match.”

Seeing his members making fun of each other through the reflection of the mirror, Sugawara smiled. Sugawara squeezed a bit of shampoo on his hands, then washed his hair quietly, then thought of what Hinata said earlier.

– I want to play in matches, I want to remain on the court.

Sugawara could fully comprehend Hinata’s thinking. Of course, everyone wished they had a chance to play in matches.

However..... He thought to himself while looking at his own reflection in the mirror.

Compared to me, the team needed Kageyama more right now. This was of course natural, since we’re serious in what we do—we play to win.

Although frustrating, I should not be unclear of the current situation. The enemy is not Kageyama—the rival team is.

For the sake of the team..... for the sake of the team’s victory, no matter a first year or third year, I believe that the capable ones should be the ones chosen as official players.

No, all these talks about doing it for the sake of the team is all diplomacy, of course.

This is actually all for the sake of ensuring that I can join in the match.

If we lose, everything would come to an end. But if we win, and continue winning, I would have the chance to be on the court, too.

Sugawara rinsed his head with warm water, the bubbles flowing past the ceramic tiles under his feet. Sugawara closed his eyes as he continued thinking.

Hinata can jump, and he can perform the freak quick together with Kageyama.

Then what about me? No, that's not right. It's not about what I can or cannot do, that's besides the point.

The point is, I want to do it.

I want to continue playing volleyball, I want to play in matches, I want to win.

Even if it's embarrassing, even if I'm ridiculed, I still want to continue playing volleyball. I want to play with the others whom I have worked hard together with.....

Sugawara turned off the shower head. He looked at his reflection in the mirror and nodded, then said "Yes" to himself in a tiny voice. Amidst the steam, the other members' voices echoed.

"Eh? Will Asahi san drown?"

"Nah, I think he just doesn't know when to come out."

Nishinoya was all worried, but Sawamura gave his conclusion coldly. Azumane peeked up from the bath.

"..... Daichi, you're so cold these days."

"Shut up, let's go already."

Seeing Sugawara, who was just about to enter the bath, Sawamura spoke:

"Right, you too Suga. The first years are still waiting, don't submerge in there for too long."

"Yeah."

Sugawara smiled as he replied, then went into the bath.

I'll tell Daichi and Asahi later. For the sake of ensuring the team's victory, for the sake of allowing myself to continue playing the volleyball I want to play.....

Sugawara finally arrived at the moment of making his decision.

—

Tanaka, who nearly fainted due to excitement, along with the wet-haired Nishinoya, whined about the weather as they walked along the corridor.

"Ryu, I'm going to the toilet."

“I’ll head back first, then.”

The third years were the only ones left at the changing room.

How many times have I been here with the other two? Sugawara thought of it while changing into a new T-shirt. He then called upon the two others.

“Daichi, Asahi.”

Both of them, who were just about to measure their body fat percentage on the weighing machine, turned to look at him.

“Hmm?”

“What is it?”

Sugawara told them whatever was on his mind.

“I think in order to win, the person we need right now is Kageyama.”

The smiles disappeared across their faces. Sawamura, unable to hide his troubled expression, said:

“..... Why are you talking about this suddenly?”

“It’s not sudden, I’ve just always been thinking about it..... of course I feel frustrated to, because I do want to continue playing with you guys. But I’m someone who has worked hard towards victory since my first year, therefore, I can’t stand it if the team loses because of me.”

“Suga.....”

“I’m not giving up volleyball, I’m doing this for the team, for our victory, from now onwards I’ll do whatever is within my capacity.”

After saying what he needed to say, Sugawara stared at the two.

“..... Did you make this decision by yourself? We can think about it again.....”

Sawamura spoke after a long pause, Azumane nodded too, his expression lonely.

“..... As for me..... hmm, how should I put it..... I’m back on the court all because of you.....”

Hearing what the two said, Sugawara smiled lightly.

Just then, someone came knocking on the door.

“Excuse me—!”

“Because I saw a stranger the moment I turned around in the toilet.”

“I don’t think anyone would not recognise him, he just let down his hair, that’s all.”

The noisy first years rushed into the changing room, then stopped at the door. As if stunned by the third years, who turned to look at them in unison, Hinata said:

“Ah, sorry, Tanaka senpai told us we can take our baths already.....”

“It’s okay, we’re about to leave anyway.”

“Remember to clean the bathroom after use.”

Sawamura regained his usual captain-like expression. The first years replied energetically:

“Yes!”

—

On the second night, the tired yet excited members stayed awake until very late before they finally slept. After confirming that everyone was asleep, Sugawara took out a pen and notebook from his bag secretly.

He flipped opened his notebook, then started scribbling on it while lying on his futon.

He was writing out the hand signals his senpais had passed down to him. A-quick, B-quick, C-quick, side-by-side, double quick.....

“I have to let the first years memorise them quickly.”

Sugawara cannot match his tosses to the spikers like Kageyama, hence he would like to make use of this training camp to try practicing with Hinata and Tsukishima.

As he wrote down the hand signals, he realised that he couldn’t wait to take part in the practices from tomorrow onwards.

That’s right, Sugawara hadn’t given up.

He'll do whatever it takes to ensure victory for the team.
Sugawara has once again taken a step towards victory.

—

On the next day on the third of May, the members of the volleyball club returned to the gymnasium after having lunch. The afternoon practices will soon begin—the schedule for the training camp is very packed.

“Hoo.....”

Sugawara yawned due to lack of sleep. Sawamura stared at him suspiciously.

“Suga, you're too relaxed. Do you want to end the day doing a hundred serves?”

“Ah, sorry!”

Sugawara apologised while feeling grateful towards Sawamura, whose attitude remained unchanged. He didn't let his emotions take the lead, thinking that the third years must behave in a certain way or think in a certain manner just because “you're already a third year”. He's really glad to have Sawamura, who accepts him the way he is, as his teammate.

However, hearing what Sawamura just said, the other members—especially the second years, started complaining.

“Daichi san! Please be easy on us, we're talking about serving a hundred times~”

“It has finally appeared! Joint responsibility!”

“The captain is in his demon form now.....”

Amidst the chaos, Hinata said with excitement across his face:

“But this really does have the feel of being in a training camp!”

Hinata was all excited, his hands grabbing onto a volleyball. Sugawara smiled as he looked at him.

“Haha, that's true. Then let's begin, a hundred times.”

“Yes!”

Hinata rushed forward after shouting energetically. Kageyama, as if pitting himself against Hinata, started to practice his jump serves. Sugawara started practicing as well.

Seeing the three of them, Tanaka, who was still whining earlier, suddenly spoke with vigor:

“If that’s the case, then let’s compete and see who finishes first!”

“Serving a hundred times or basically any theories on willpower has no meaning to them whatsoever.....”

Although complaining, Tsukishima still picked up a ball. Yamaguchi mumbled to himself:

“If we’re doing serves, then, me too.....”

Everyone started practicing their serves after what Sugawara said. Sawamura looked at each other, feeling pleased. Sawamura is very certain about Sugawara, who had been with him the past three years, and his ability to switch up the mood of the whole team.

“This is indeed a highly motivated team, Daichi-san!”

Nishinoya said as he walked towards Sawamura. Sawamura replied:

“..... What are you talking about, you have to practice too!”

“What?”

“Of course! Hey, guys, finish up with your serves by midnight!”

“Yes!”

The members shouted in reply.

Sawamura smiled as he looked at Nishinoya, who was approaching him. Sugawara picked up the ball with familiarity.

He thought through as he fixed his eyes onto the ball.

I’ll tell the coach after today’s practice. Also, I have to pass the hand signals to Hinata. I want to be able to match my toss with him as soon as possible.

He bent backwards gracefully, then hit the ball out.

That's right, I can only appreciate every moment like this. This is the path I chose.....

Everyone has their own way of thinking.

The sound of the balls bouncing sounded throughout the second gymnasium.

-end-

The King heads to the street to buy food (re-upload)

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May 4th

8:30 pm

At the big room in the training camp—

Kageyama Tobio walks out of the steam-filled bathroom. Wearing a pair of slippers, he walks up the stairs and back to the sleeping room.

“...Osu.”

Kageyama greeted everyone in the room quietly as he opens the door. The members in the room are all spending time on their own, and although everyone has already eaten their dinner and taken their baths, it was still too early for bed. Most of them were lying on their futons doing nothing while waiting for time to pass. Probably because the training during the day was too tiring, some has already fallen asleep.

“Ennoshita, pass me the Monthly Volleyball magazine.”

“This is the February’s edition though.”

“Ah, there’re mosquitoes flying around.”

“Really? I am prone to getting bitten by them.”

“Ah, your blood type must be O.”

“No?”

“... I feel like sleeping.”

“Then sleep.”

“I don’t know if I can wake up tomorrow.”

After a hard day at training, all members are feeling so lethargic their conversations felt lethargic as well.

In the midst of these boring conversations, Kageyama carefully walks between the futons to his own. Quietly, he hangs his wet towel on to the drying rack, then

took out a nail clipper from his bag.

(the sound of filing nails)

He files his nails while hugging his knee close to his body.

The atmosphere around him were filled with the members' lethargies.

"I can't cut my nails at night."

"Ah, Asahi looks like he's someone brought up by his granny."

"My tummy feels itchy~"

"... That's dirty, stop scratching, Ryuu!"

"Oh? These are all Tsukishima brought along with him? Isn't it too little?"

"Is it?"

Everyone voiced out whatever they felt and saw. In simpler terms, it means to say whatever was on their mind. Although it wasn't even 9 pm, the room was already filled with a late night's atmosphere.

"Aren't the walls too white?"

"Is it?"

At this point in time, haven't the members realised that they are immersing themselves in a time called Bliss? People always enjoy themselves without realising so, only to regret after letting go of such moments, saying things like "I was so blessed at that time...". Perhaps, this moment right now is exactly what bliss looks like.

That's right, they do not notice it themselves—that tonight was a blissful moment for the members. Right until the cursed word appears...

On the night on May 4th, a certain remarks had the members fall into hell. That remark was...

"...I think I'm hungry."

Until now, no one knew who spoke of this remark in the first place.

—

"... I think I'm hungry."

"Ah, me too! I think I'm hungry too!"

"That's right."

“I think I’m getting hungry too.”

“Tsukki, that’s because you didn’t finish your fried horse mackerel just now!”

“Shut up.”

A combination of fatigue, hunger and after-bath effect, all the members are now feeling lethargic. The look in their eyes suddenly lit up the previously lethargic atmosphere in the room.

This remark felt like a trigger for such a change in the atmosphere.

A person must view great strength as a double-edged sword. But no one in this room had the power to notice this. This is not anyone’s responsibility—it could only be said to be the fault of an empty stomach.

Tanaka threw the half-read volleyball magazine to a side.

“Alright, let’s head out to buy food.”

“Oh? Buy food?”

Hinata looked surprised.

“Hmm? Hinata, are you willing to go?”

With gleaming eyes, Hinata nodded. Initially thinking that the plan would go on smoothly, Tsukishima suddenly looked irritated. He looked up and pointed at Hinata’s excited expression.

“I don’t think we should entrust the plan to this guy.”

“What do you mean?”

“Hmm, that’s true. If we entrust the plan to Hinata, it feels almost as if it’s a child’s first time out on the streets to buy stuff.”

“Huh? Even Sugawara-senpai says so?”

Seeing Hinata’s disappointed face, everyone let out a sheepish laugh. Although no one voiced out, everyone had the same thought as Tsukishima and Sugawara. Volleyball stuff aside, entrusting something as important as cash to a careless person such as Hinata doesn’t seem like a smart move.

“Let’s play rock-scissors-paper then!”

Tanaka suggested excitedly.

“Hey, Kageyama! You too!”

Hearing Tanaka, Kageyama, who didn’t want to be disturbed, turned around.

“...yes.”

Unsure if he was not hungry, or that he was irritated to be disturbed while filing his nails, Kageyama, looking disinterested, joined the other members.

“Alright, everyone is here. Then, scissors, rock...”

“Paper!”

In that moment, all members let out a cry.

“OH OH OH OH OH OH OH OH!”

“Thank god!”

“That’s great!”

Everyone had their hands clenched in a fist, and amidst this celebratory mood, only a single person was staring at his own hand, and that person was Kageyama.

“Kageyama, I didn’t expect you to lose immediately in the first round!”

“This was so difficult, having to lose with so many people around...”

“...Urgh.”

Kageyama tightly clenched his fist, as if to break his own fingers.

“I can’t believe the king is going to the streets himself to buy food for us peasants.”

Tsukishima waved his palm around while snickering. Nishinoya patted Kageyama, who was trembling due to shame, on his back.

“Then, Kageyama, sorry for the trouble! Sakanoshita should still be open.”

“... Yes.”

With a pained back view, along with his still warm body after the bath.

“Then, I’ll take the orders...”

Kageyama wore his sports wear on top of this T-shirt. With much reluctance, he started taking orders. The first to put down his order was Tanaka.

“I want a cow tongue with mayo onigiri, what about Daichi-san?”

Tanaka threw the conversation over to Sawamura, who was reading his journal.

“Then I want fishcake baguette.”

“Healthy kelp sprout with cheese croquette, thank you.”

After Tsukishima finished making his order with a nonchalant face, Nishinoya, who was on his futon doing abdominal exercise, made his order too.

“I want mixed rice crackers and strawberry milk soda.”

“Then I would like...”

Azumane fell into deep thoughts. Kageyama, who was standing in front of him, slightly looked down.

“... I need to remember the orders, Senpai can you wait for me for awhile?”

Then, Kageyama started searching his bag that was beside his pillow, but it didn't look like he found what he needed. Hence, Kageyama said to Hinata, who was beside him:

“Hey, lend me a pen.”

“Ah, sorry, I left my pencil case in the classroom.”

“Tch, then...”

Kageyama looked around the room to look for a pen. Right then, Tanaka stood up suddenly. With a cheeky smile, he went closer to Kageyama.

“Of course I don't have a pen with me, too, but, I have a good idea, and that is...”

Tanaka managed to attract everyone's attention, then, he pointed towards Kageyama.

“Memorise them!”

“Huh?”

Kageyama frowned, but Tanaka, with a “so what!” expression, continued saying.

“Setters need to use their brains to ensure victory, right?”

“These are two different...”

“They're the same! Memorisation is an important skill! How can we entrust our team to a setter who can't even memorise hand signs...”

Tanaka smiled fiendishly while Kageyama couldn't even muster an expression. Unknown whether he was afraid of getting implicated, Hinata swallowed his saliva while standing at a side.

However, Kageyama only frowned, then lowered his head, saying:

“...I will memorise them, just you see.”

This guy is definitely angry... Hinata looked on at Kageyama’s expression. Hearing this, Hinata let out a face of shock.

Tsukishima, on the other hand, laughed.

“Better not! See, his retainers are all worried. Plus, the king is not good at preparing for exams too, right? If he failed this time as well, his ego is going to be hurt.”

“You bastard...”

“I’m speaking the truth.”

The tension between Kageyama and Tsukishima rises.

Hinata was complaining “I wasn’t worried at all! And I’m not his retainer!”, but none of them heard what he was saying.

The Senpais, unknown whether they have given up or didn’t care anymore due to fatigue and hunger, remained quiet.

After a painful silence, Kageyama spoke up once again:

“I will definitely remember them.”

The fluorescent lamp above his head flickers.

—

Tying his shoe laces on his sport shoes, Kageyama hurried out from the dormitory to Sakanoshita. The trip took less than 5 minutes.

With little street lights, the gibbous moon shone its light on the streets. The ready-for-harvest broad bean crops swayed in the wind. The cool wind, blowing on Kageyama’s skin after a bath made him feel very comfortable.

To others, it may have looked as if he was taking a night walk gracefully. But Kageyama himself didn’t feel so relaxed.

“Cowtonguemayoonigiriricecakebaguettehealthykelpsproutwithcheesecroquet

Kageyama was repeating everyone’s order again and again on the dark street

at night. If he tripped and lost his rhythm, he might forget several items such as bread or juice. Hence, he maintained a certain speed, ignored every other things and tried not to think of other stuff. As if chanting a curse, Kageyama continued walking on the street.

Because no matter what, this trip would affect his pride as a setter. He cannot afford to make any mistakes in his purchase.

“Healthykelpsproutwithcheesecroquettemixedricecrackerswithstrawberrymilks

Kageyama prayed hard to not see anyone on the street—not Coach Ukai or Takeda sensei, both of whom are staying at the same dormitory, nor the club manager Shimizu, who stays nearby. In all, he doesn’t want to meet anyone. If he had to greet, no, just a nod alone could make him forget everything he has memorised. If possible, he even hoped to stop blinking or breathing.

“Fishcakebaguettehealthykelpsproutwithcheesecroquettemixedricecrackerswithst

However, no matter how much he tried not to think, once he lost concentration, what Tanaka said previously would resurface on his mind.

He said he cannot entrust the team to me...?

Kageyama clenched his teeth.

I have to complete this mission perfectly!

I want to let everyone... take a look at me carefully!

With a “hmph”, his breath grew messy, his footsteps slightly harder than before. He continued chanting everyone’s orders again and again while looking in front, and continued walking and walking and walking...

Along the slope, a shop with a vending machine placed near the front door had its shop sign still lit. That shop is sakanoshita.

Just a while more, just a while more...

“cowtonguemayoonigirifishcakebaguettehealthykelpsproutwithcheese...”

But as he was approaching the shop front, he was so shocked he couldn’t utter a word.

The light at Sakanoshita is already turned off.

“What?”

A “closed” sign hangs swaying on the closed automated door.

“...Is this for real?”

Kageyama’s face grew stiff, then he roared at the closed automated door.

“HOW CAN YOU BE CLOSED ALREADY!”

On the streets where even a single passing car could not be heard, Kageyama’s face was lit up by the red and blue lights from the vending machines.

“Ah...”

Then, all the orders that everyone had made disappeared from his mind.

—

“...Sorry.”

Kageyama bowed in apology as he returned to the room.

The messy room didn’t look any different from when he just finished bathing. But in reality, the situation right now is vastly different.

That’s right, everyone is very hungry right now.

Tanaka lies lazily on his futon while looking up towards Kageyama. He had a face full of expectations, only to see Kageyama empty-handed.

“Ah.. Hey, where’s my cow tongue mayo onigiri?”

Tanaka’s voice trembled as he walks towards Kageyama, his eyes already blood-shot. His shocking look felt like a hunting dog who has lost its prey. Kageyama stared at Tanaka, who is now right in front of him.

“Uh, Sakanoshita is already closed for the day.”

“...What?”

Tanaka stared at Kageyama.

“Huh?”

“What? So you just came back?”

“Ah, yes.”

Upon hearing Kageyama’s honest reply, Tanaka dropped his shoulders

dejectedly.

“Is this your first time buying stuff on the street...”

“Alright, alright, Tanaka, don’t be so harsh, okay?”

Just as Sugawara was trying to loosen up the atmosphere, Tsukishima, who was lazily lying against the wall fiddling with his hand phone, and, perhaps really hungry, purposefully mumbled to himself:

“I’m hungry.”

“... Ah.”

Kageyama looked around the room and realised that everyone was looking at him like “hey, what about my food?”.

“Damn it...”

Kageyama clenched his teeth.
What a detestable mistake.

This should not purely be just a trip to help buy food. He had wanted to let everyone acknowledge his abilities as a setter, but reasons such as “the shop is already closed” might just let others feel that he is unable to make decisions on the spot, hence unsuitable for the role as a setter.

“Damn it...”

Acknowledging his misjudgment, Kageyama’s facial expression changed considerably. Nishnoya then said:

“Shimada mart should still be open by now.”

“Eh? Shimada...”

Shimada mart is different from Sakanoshita. It is located at Karasuno shopping street, which is very far from the dormitory. Who knows how long it would take to reach there by foot? Even if he were to borrow a bike from Hinata, the trip to and fro would most likely take about 30 minutes.

If that’s the case, wouldn’t it be faster to just cook in the kitchen?

Just as Kageyama was about to retaliate, Azumane, who was lying down reading manga, suddenly thought of something:

“Ah Ah, yes, I guess only Shimada mart is open nearby at this hour. When I was

in the first year, I was also called upon by the senpais to help buy stuff. The streets nearby had little lighting and was really dark, so I could only run, hahaha...”

Hearing Azumane talking about the past, Kageyama suddenly stopped frowning.

“Is that so...”

“Eh? Ah, why?”

Kageyama continued staring at Azumane’s face, even making Azumane slightly afraid. Kageyama then lowered his head.

“Yes, I’ll head over now. Ah, senpais, can I trouble you all to repeat your orders?”

“...Oh, of course!”

Hearing the word “Senpai”, Tanaka’s mood instantly became better. He repeated again.

“I’ll stick with the same, cow tongue mayo onigiri. What about Daichi-san?”

Sawamura stared at the match allocation table, and, without raising his head: “I’m changing fishcake baguette to two chikuwa mayo breads and nutrition sticks.”

“I want two edamame paste daifuku on top of the healthy kelp sprout with cheese croquette.”

Tsukishima stretched his body while saying. Nishinoya did stretching exercise while saying:

“I don’t want mixed rice crackers with strawberry milk soda anymore. I want to change to shark’s fin bun and cow tongue hot dog!”

“Then, uh, what should I have? Oyster miso senbei and...”

Azumane stayed lying down while thinking.

Kageyama closed his eyes while counting with his fingers, concentrating on taking the orders. His face grew stiffer.

... Just leave the orders as it is, why do they have to change?

However, in order to win over everyone’s confidence, such small errands could

yield him some trust from the others. In order to become someone like Sugawara senpai, who earned the trust of all members as a setter...

Kageyama decided that in order to regain his reputation, he could only head out to buy the members food now.

He must let everyone acknowledge his position as a setter!

—

How long has it been since Kageyama headed out to buy food?

On the second floor of the dormitory, in a spacious room with futons laid fully on the floor, members of the volleyball club are all fighting against their hunger.

“...Ennoshita, do you have chocolate?”

“If you need protein nutrition bars, I do have them in the kitchen...”

“Protein nutrition bars, protein... but, just thinking of walking to the kitchen made me feel so tired.”

“Stop rolling around, even I am running out... of... energy.”

“Then, Tsukishima, you head over to the kitchen and make some food. Something like fried rice or omelette rice.”

“I say, naming dishes when hungry is a big taboo!”

A person loses strength when they're hungry. Everyone feels like cooked mochi right now, lying on their futons. Tanaka rolled around, biting his pillow with a crying expression.

“...How should I put it, why hasn't Kageyama come back yet... Where's my cow tongue mayo onigiri...”

“Who knows...”

“... That's dirty, stop biting the pillow already.”

“You're not the only one hungry.”

Everyone lay listless on their own futons, murmuring in a mosquito-like volume. Some 10-odd minutes ago, everyone looked as if they were here for a study trip, but now the atmosphere in the dormitory has grown heavy, devoid of energy.

At this moment, Tsukishima, who was hugging his head and knees together

while leaning against the wall, began to speak.

“...Did the king run away? He must have thought that hungry peasants like us didn't matter to him...”

“That guy wouldn't be like this... but, no, perhaps he's lost his way...?”

Tanaka burrowed his bald head into his pillow, his face showing.

“Hinata, quit daydreaming, go look for Kageyama now!”

“Eh? Ah, yes...”

Hinata, who was hugging his knees to his body because he was so hungry, swayed his body left and right. He stood up feeling dazed and, putting on his sports wear, walked out of the room.

“Although Kageyama looks scary, he does have his ditzy moments... I can't let my cow tongue mayo onigiri lose its way before even meeting me.”

Tanaka mumbled to himself. Sugawara spoke as well.

“...But, is it really okay to send Hinata out? Didn't that guy lose his way during the road run yesterday...”

“Ah...”

Everyone looked at each other pale faced.

The sound of a dog barking filled the night, disappearing after a long howl.

—

The foreboding came true.

“To think both of them did not return...”

Kageyama did not return after heading out to buy food, Hinata, who went out to look for him afterwards, did not return as well. After a long time, it was soon 10 pm. Hinata, who hurried out after being forced to go look for Kageyama, left his hand phone in the dormitory.

“Ooh, ooh ooh, ooh oh oh oh oh oh oh !”

Tanaka, who was originally lying on his futon, suddenly mumbled to himself like a beast, then rolled on his futon, his eyes devoid of any reasoning. However, this

room has gradually lost all gentleness of a human, hence no one cared about him.

“So annoying...”

“I already said, don’t come near me.”

“Uwah! Ryu! Your feet touched mine!”

Where have all the initially kind members of the volleyball club gone? Even though he was despised wherever he went, Tanaka continued rolling around the room, until his face knocked onto a bag left on the tatami. He finally stopped.

“...So painful.”

That was Hinata’s bag.

The contents of the bag fell as it got knocked down.

“See, didn’t I tell you to stop rolling around?”

Sawamura, who couldn’t stand it anymore, scolded him.

But Tanaka raised his head, his expression now is vastly different from what it was like before. His eyes were gleaming.

“I heard it.”

How do you differentiate humans from beasts?

Or perhaps you could put it this way, beasts eat for the purpose of living, but humans eat for the purpose of pursuing health and tastes. If that’s the case, Tanaka has just crossed over to the world of beasts. He is now looking for food purely for the sake of survival.

“... I heard the sound of snacks.”

“What?”

“I definitely heard it with my ears! This bag let out a sound of snacks!”

The hungry beast started moving towards the bag, following his desire.

“ Hey, stop it! Don’t touch others’ belongings...!”

Tanaka refused to listen to Sawamura, tightly grabbing onto the prawn crackers that flew out from the bag, raising it above his head towards the ceiling.

“I found prawn crackers!”

Sure enough, Humans need to be adequately clothed and fed to know their manners. If that's the case, things such as a human's dignity may well be an illusion influenced by hunger.

Under the fluorescent light, the prawn crackers shone with god-like brilliance. Everyone looked on at the packet of prawn crackers.

Tanaka shouted victoriously.

"Hey, look! That guys had the nerve to hide the prawn crackers at such a place...? Eh? This... Uwah!"

The packet has been opened, its content—crushed prawn crackers fell onto the floor.

"What is this? It's all crushed! This is not prawn crackers, but prawn powder!"

Tanaka patted off the powder on his bald head, the other members complaining.

"...Hey, stop patting, they're all falling on the futons."

"Please keep quiet."

"My, what to do with this feeling of mine, my...!"

Tanaka wanted to describe his feelings, but no one really paid attention.

"That's enough, baldy."

"Hey, baldy, we get it, can you keep quiet?"

"My stomach is already empty, and your voice kept echoing inside, so stop speaking anymore, baldy senpai."

Tanaka, teary-eyed, was about to lash out at the members—

"... You guys!"

Sawamura finally let out an angry roar.

His voice was so loud it vibrated across the still air in the room. Everyone sat up straight instinctively.

"Sit here."

Sawamura ordered everyone to sit in a row in front of him in a low voice, then scolded them.

“Right till now, just what did you guys treat teamwork as? What is the purpose of having this training camp?”

The room, which was still bustling a while ago, became very quiet all of a sudden.

The members, who were all sitting in a row, knocked onto each other on their elbows, as if they were telling each other to apologise already.

...Right then.

grumble~~~ grummmmbbllleeeee...

In the quiet room, someone’s tummy had growled.
The demoralised members suddenly started a commotion.

“Oh oh...”

“... Who is it?”

“Not me.”

“It came from here, isn’t it?”

“Which means...”

Everyone has their eyes fixed onto Sawamura, who was standing right in front of them.

Unsure whether it was going to spoil soon, the fluorescent light on the ceiling flickered.

“Uh uh...”

Sawamura, blushing, pressed onto his tummy, then turned around and walked towards the door.

“Alright! Since everyone is worried about them, let’s head out to look for them!”

“... Yes.”

The hungry members of the the volleyball club headed out one by one.

—

Wearing the same sports uniform, members of the volleyball club walked on the street at night side by side. Unsure if it was due to hunger, everyone walked unstably, devoid of any traces of energy.

On the road surrounded by fields, because there were only old mercury lamps, the road was still very dark. Kageyama and Hinata both walked alone on a dark and quiet street like this.

“Speaking of which, where are the two guys?”

Tanaka squinted his eyes as he looked forward, but it didn’t look like there were anyone in front.

“Hopefully they didn’t meet with any accident...”

Sugawara was slightly worried, but Tsukishima replied instantly:

“Two people meeting with accidents separately? I think the chances of both of them missing their way back is slightly higher.”

“Tsukki at the crime prevention tag line competition...”

“Shut up.”

Yamaguchi stopped talking as soon as Tsukishima told him to. Tsukishima then continued:

“One person gone missing, two people gone missing, the next to go missing would be...”

“S..Stop saying things like this!”

Azumane, who has been scared since the beginning, spoke as if he was going to cry.

“Asahi senpai, you’re so embarrassing!”

“Don’t be like this, everyone has something they’re good at and not good at... Eh, the moon has gone hiding behind the clouds.”

Hearing Sawamura, everyone lifted their heads up to look at the sky. The cloud has blocked the moon, the surrounding became even darker.

Just then, a noise came from the surrounding fields.

“Hmm? What is it?”

“Is it Kageyama and Hinata?”

Everyone stopped at their tracks, just then, something ran from the fields to

between their legs.

“Uwah!”

“W-what is it?”

“It hurts!”

“Uwah, don’t scratch me!”

The unidentified black object harassed the members silently, and everyone tried to move away from it, however, the unidentified object continued moving between their legs.

In a dark surrounding like this, everyone fell into a slight state of terror.

“Hey hey hey hey hey!”

“Ah! I can’t take it anymore!”

“Hey, hey, where’s everyone?”

“Uwah ah ah! Demons begone! Demons begone!”

Just as Tanaka was screaming, a small beacon of light appeared. It came from Tsukishima, who used his hand phone’s screen as a light source.

In the light stood a small raccoon dog.

The raccoon dog, who had a broad bean pod hanging from its mouth, stood rooted on the ground in fear of the light, then hurried back into the fields, disappearing into the darkness.

“Is this for real?”

“I can’t believe there’re raccoon dogs here.”

“This is my first time seeing it.”

“... All in all, let’s be careful.”

Everyone, owing to the raccoon dog and their empty stomachs, were feeling demoralised. Everyone stood rooted onto the ground, then slowly started moving again one by one. Nishinoya, who was walking right in front, was neither afraid of the dark nor scared of wild animals. He walked with big steps alone.

“W-wait for me, Noya...”

The timid Tanaka had wanted to catch up to Nishinoya, but his feet wouldn’t budge, and he couldn’t walk properly. Azumane, who was hiding between

Sawamura and Sugawara, was getting the cold treatment.

“Eh, Asahi, don’t stick so close to me.”

Tanaka and Azumane, both of whom were struggling with their steps, accidentally knocked onto the more-sensitive-than-usual Tsukishima. Tsukishima glared at them.

“Hey, please do not push me.”

The members of the volleyball club stuck onto each other, everyone unwilling to move forward. Nishinoya, who was getting impatient from waiting for the others, turned around and said:

“I’m leaving first!”

Everyone let out a cry for help.

“How can you do this...”

“Ah, ah, Noya, don’t leave me alone...”

“What are you guys talking about? Compared to you guys, the two are more worrisome! Listen carefully, leave everything to me, you guys wait here!”

After saying, Nishinoya turned around again and was ready to continue walking. But he stopped at his footsteps and let out a cry in surprise.

“Hmm?”

He pointed towards the front of the street.

“Hey, what’s that?”

The petrified members looked towards where Nishinoya was pointing at.

On a street with neither street lights or road signs, two beacons of white light were moving.

“T-that can’t be spirits, right?”

“... How can it be.”

“Then what are they? How can humans be capable of doing such weird actions?”

“They do look like flashes of lightning.”

“... Are they UFOs?”

“Alright, let me confirm it!”

Nishinoya ran forward, the other members followed as well for fear of being left behind.

“W-wait for me!”

The sounds of the members’ footsteps, along with the back view of their black sports uniform, disappeared into the darkness...

After the members left, the street became so quiet you could hear a pin drop. All that was left was the sound of a dog’s bark from nowhere, and the sound of wind blowing past the fields.

No, and a tiny, slightly trembling voice.

A huge body lay lying on the streets—that person is Azumane, who couldn’t move an inch due to fear. He has been left behind by the other members.

“U-uwah ah ah, don’t leave me behind...”

—

What the members saw were neither souls nor spirits, and of course they weren’t UFOs. But everyone was confused as to what was right in front of them, unsure of what to say.

“And right here, you hit it with a “fwah!””

“Stupid, that would have been blocked by the opponents.”

“Then we’ll just jump at this point sooner?”

The light source came from two flashlights.

Kageyama and Hinata had tied the flashlights onto their heads, and, for unknown reasons, they were jumping around in the middle of the road, full of energy.

The members were all too shocked for words.

“These two, were indeed doing actions beyond the average human.”

“Lame.”

“So much for worrying about them.”

Hearing sighs coming from the members, Kageyama stopped at his tracks. In the darkness, he saw the other members who were walking in a single file.

Puzzled, he asked:

“Everyone is gathered here, did something happen?”

“What do you mean what happened? I was just about to ask what’s wrong with your brains?”

Tanaka screamed.

The flashlights shone onto the two faces, which grew paler and paler.

“Ah! Oh no!”

“Right! Buy food!”

Sawamura stood in front of the flustered two.

“... You two, working hard at practicing, huh.”

“Uh, no, that...”

Based on what the pale-faced, helpless looking Kageyama said, on his way back to the dormitory, he, together with Hinata, started getting too excited while discussing about buddy practices, hence it became a special practice session.

Hinata, who was standing beside Kageyama, nodded in agreement.

The members of the volleyball club have officially given up, each of them squatting along the street one by one.

“Fools who only knows volleyball..”

“They’re really fools!”

“Forget it, there’s no point telling a fool he’s a fool...”

Just as everyone was whining, Sawamura said:

“... That’s enough, I understand, no, it doesn’t matter even if I understood, the point is, where’s the food we asked you to buy?”

It’s no wonder Sawamura would ask, because there were no plastic bags from the super mart to be seen near the two. The surrounding had nothing but darkness.

Kageyama poked Hinata.

“Hey, let me ask you, where’re the plastic bags?”

“Eh? Just now when I was riding on my bicycle, weren’t you holding them

yourself?”

“Is that so?”

“Ah, then I took one of them.”

“Where did you put it? Right, where’s your bicycle?”

“Eh? Where did I park it... Ah, I know!”

Somewhere away from the pole stood a bicycle with a basket in front. While the two were having their “special training”, they had moved quite a distance away from the bicycle. There were indeed plastic bags from the super mart in the basket.

Everyone let out a sigh of relief, then rushed to the bicycle. Everyone crowded around to snatch what was inside the plastic bags.

“I’m so hungry!”

“It’s food!”

“Let’s eat as we head back!”

In the darkness, Tanaka, who was the first to dig into the plastic bags, suddenly let out a groan.

“Yah!”

Seeing Tanaka take a step back in shock, Tsukishima poked Kageyama.

“You, you did not buy something weird, did you?”

“How can it be!”

Kageyama took out the receipt from Shimada mart and gave it to Tsukishima, then glared at him. Just as the tension between them were rising, Tanaka took out the plastic packaging that was supposed to wrap onto the onigiri. The plastic packaging flapped in the wind.

“I-it’s been eaten...”

The other members let out a cry.

“My shark’s fin bun has also been eaten!”

“Edamame paste daifuku...”

Tanaka turned around and stared in disbelief at Kageyama and Hinata.

“Did you guys eat them?”

“How can it be us! We didn’t eat them!”

Hinata shouted, his face turned red, Kageyama shook his head as well.

“Then...”

Just then, a noise came from the fields.

“Ah!”

Hinata pointed towards the fields, Sawamura shouted at the top of his lungs.

“My chikuwa mayo bread!”

In the broad bean field right beside the street, a raccoon dog, with a chikuwa mayo bread hanging by its mouth, stood staring at everyone.

“Raccoon dog again!”

Everyone still had the commotion earlier on fresh in their minds, each adopting a defensive stance.

“Hey, you raccoon dog, eating such stuff will upset your stomach!”

Hinata wanted to give chase to the raccoon dog, but it disappeared right into the broad bean field. The movement of the raccoon dog caused a rustling noise in the field.

“Everything has been eaten...”

After confirming the horrible state in the plastic bags, Tanaka rolled his eyes. Then, shaking the already messy plastic bags, he rushed towards Kageyama.

“Kageyama, you bastard—!”

“Ooh, wah! Sorry!”

Kageyama took a step back, then apologised profusely. Tanaka grabbed him from behind, then shouted towards Nishinoya:

“Noya, go!”

“This is not something... that can be resolved solely by apologising!”

Just as Nishinoya was about to give Kageyama two punches—

“Yah!”

This time it was Hinata’s turn to scream.

The huge figure looming above Hinata, was Azumane. Unknown when he finally caught up, he grabbed Hinata on his shoulders with his huge palms, his face showing an about-to-cry expression.

“... Why did you all leave me behind? Why? Just why?”

“Ah, uh uh , S-s-sorry!”

Hinata apologised profusely while getting shaken by Azumane. Just then, Sawamura appeared behind him.

“You guys...”

Sawamura’s face popped in front of where Hinata’s flashlights were shining at.

“... The way you guys were so noisy, are your stomachs no longer hungry?”

Seeing his angry, regretful and hunger-induced twisted expression, the members who were surrounding Kageyama and Hinata all took a deep breath, then shrunk their bodies.

In the darkness, Sawamura’s angry roar sounded throughout.

“Everyone will reflect together! Everyone will serve the ball continuously for 100 times! No food for all until everyone’s done!”

-end-

If Shimizu Kiyoko wasn't the club manager (re-upload)

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May 5th
1pm

May 5th, 13:00. At the canteen in the dormitory—

Tanaka Ryuunosuke and Nishinoya Yuu stayed at the dining table after finishing their lunches. The forgotten after-meal tea placed in front of them had long cooled down.

Despite awkwardly stretching their necks and spines, they still managed a manly expression. Looking towards the same direction, both of them mumbled at the same time:

“..... Apron.”

Standing right at where they were looking was the club's manager, Shimizu, who was washing the dishes. With a sponge full of bubbles in her hand, she cleaned all the utensils one by one. The sound of the sponge rubbing against the utensils felt comfortable.

On the first day of the training camp, Tanaka and Nishinoya had said that they'll help the manager with stuff in the kitchen, but they were rejected almost immediately, the reason being “it's faster if I do it myself”, and that made a lot of sense. After every meal, the two of them would stare at Shimizu as she cleans the utensils while wearing the white apron, as if a must-do during the training camp.

“These days, how should I put it, it's like.....”

Tanaka, touched, spoke with trembling voice while teary-eyed. Nishinoya stretched out his hand to stop him from continuing further.

“Ryuu, don't say anymore.”

“Why?”

“Because once you say it out, happiness will slip away.”

“W-What are you talking about? It sounds so cool!”

“Isn’t it so?”

Just as the two were busy feeling all pumped up, Sawamura appeared from behind, and spoke in a low voice:

“Hey, how long more are you guys going to stay here?”

“Eh?”

“Hmm?”

The two of them looked around their surrounding quickly. Everyone else had left except the team captain, who was standing right behind them, face twitching. Everyone else should probably have started with their afternoon practices already.

“Those guys are so heartless!”

“Hurry, let’s go!”

Tanaka and Nishinoya pushed their chairs away, then rushed out of the canteen clumsily.

“Seriously.....”

Sawamura, with a face of irritation, walked to the corridor.

Then, as if waiting for the door to close, the volleyball club manager Shimizu heaved a sigh of relief.

“..... Whew.”

The atmosphere in the kitchen became less tense.

Shimizu wiped the plates clean with a clean cloth. The club’s consultant and main coach Takeda, after confirming the ingredients left in the refrigerator, said to her:

“That, Shimizu-san, are you okay?”

Shimizu, who was wringing the cloth dry, turned around silently. She looked

curiously at Takeda, who was wearing the same apron as her. Takeda, feeling her stare, continued asking nervously:

“Ah, um..... Shimizu-san, have you not been feeling well since awhile ago?”

Shimizu wiped away the bubbles by the side of the sink with the cloth as she answered:

“..... I’m alright.”

“You’re lying?”

“I’m not lying.”

“Shimizu-san?”

Takeda stood up slowly as he closed the refrigerator. The usual gentle Takeda managed an unusually serious face. His piercing gaze under his glasses finally made Shimizu confess.

“..... I think it’s heatstroke. But I’m not sure because I’ve never suffered from one before.”

“You seem to be very sensitive to the sun during the road run just now. The healthier a person, the less likely he or she is going to realise he or she’s feeling unwell, hence they push themselves. Leave the rest of the things to me, please take a good rest at home.”

“No, I’m fine.”

Shimizu then started preparing the drinks for the members. Takeda asserted:

“Shimizu-san, we have a practice match with Nekoma tomorrow. Isn’t it very important to both the team and yourself? I hope to see the usually energetic Shimizu-san at the match tomorrow.”

“.....”

After thinking through, Shimizu bowed slightly, then took off her apron.

“Sorry to leave the rest to sensei.”

—

Takeda shouted “everyone listen to me at where you’re at”, and the members stopped at what they’re doing, then turned to face him. The sounds of the balls

bouncing, the shoes rubbing against the floor, along with the murmurs of the members all came to a halt at once.

“Uh, Shimizu-san has just left because she’s feeling unwell, so I’ll take charge as the club manager starting now. I’m still unfamiliar with some of the things, so there’ll definitely be areas where.....”

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh!”

“JESUS!”

Takeda and Nishinoya starting screaming before Takeda even finished his sentence. The two of them wailed with every inch of energy they had, their voices sounded across the silent gymnasium and all the way to the ceiling.

“Damn, damn it.....! How could I have not noticed that she wasn’t feeling well just now.....”

“That’s not true, Ryuu. Given Kiyoko-san’s character, she must’ve been enduring it to prevent us from worrying for her.”

“H-Her hard work really touched me..... Kiyoko-san!”

“How did we not realise Kiyoko-san’s intent?”

“Woo..... we have been too reliant on Kiyoko-san’s gentleness.....!”

The two of them wiped off their tears with their fists, then faced each other, their faces still covered in tears.

“..... Hey, shall we replace Kiyoko-san as the club’s manager?”

“Yeah, although we can’t be as good as her, we shouldn’t be troubling Take-chan with these works!”

Takeda stopped them immediately.

“H-How can I let you guys do this, I’ll be okay! You guys concentrate on winning tomorrow’s match.....”

“No! Leave the volleyball club to us!”

“Sensei, please focus on your job!”

With a thump, the two of them pounded on their chests as they spoke. Takeda

looked at them, clearly touched.

“Y-You guys are so, dependable.....! No, let the three of us work hard together! Even if we’re weak as individuals, together we can become strong!”

“Yeah yeah!”

“That’s right!”

The three guys, with their arms on each other’s shoulders, starting speaking enthusiastically. Far away from them, Sugawara asked as he practiced his tosses:

“Daichi, is it alright to leave them as they are?”

“Even if we tell them no, they’ll still do it.....”

“That’s true.”

May 5th, Children’s day. Wing spiker Tanaka and Libero Nishinoya, have officially become the team managers for the day.

—

One hour after the beginning of the afternoon practice.

“..... I’m so thirsty!”

Hinata screamed towards the ceiling as sweat rolled down his forehead. The temperature during the morning and night were were chilly, but it became hot in the afternoon. The members, who have been exercising continuously in the gymnasium were all covered in sweat.

Hearing Hinata’s voice, Sawamura nodded in agreement while wiping off his sweat. He looked for the club manager as usual, then suddenly remembered—

“Right..... Shimizu is not around..... Hmm?”

Sawamura felt someone staring at him from behind, he turned around, slightly afraid. Tanaka and Nishinoya were busy self-promoting themselves to Sawamura. Although slightly breathless, both of them had a big smile on their faces.

“Yeah, don’t be shy.....! Let managers Tanaka and Nishinoya be of service to everyone today!”

Sawamura wanted very much to forget what was right in front of him, as if switching to a different channel. Although he pretended not to notice the two of them, they continued self-promoting themselves behind him.

“..... I feel slightly irritated.”

Tsukishima frowned while Sugawara smiled, slightly troubled.

“Yeah, it’s something we drink, after all.....”

The gymnasium was filled with a “Hey, what’s going on.....” kind of atmosphere.

Most importantly, there’s the practice match with Nekoma tomorrow. Under such circumstances, they could not afford to fall sick. But then again it’s just a dissolved sports drink, did they need to worry this much?

Tanaka and Nishinoya are no longer kids, but second year high school students.

“You guys over there! What are you guys mumbling about?”

Tanaka shouted as he raised a ball above his head.

There was no other way, given that there was only half a day left, and with Shimizu absent, this was something unpreventable.

Captain turned around with resolution.

“..... Ah ah, sorry, you guys prepared the drinks, right? Can you bring them over?”

“We’re all prepared, of course!”

“More than glad to!”

Assigned with a task finally, the both of them rushed over excitedly. Sawamura and Sugawara mumbled as they looked at them:

“How should I put it, I can’t believe we’re given such a challenge today.....”
“Forget it, let’s trust these guys.”

The two managers for the day each carried a basket full of sports drinks with smiles on their faces. They couldn’t comprehend the members’ leniency, or should I say, their “I have given up” mood. Tanaka wiped off his sweat from his

forehead, then spoke confidently:

“Sorry to keep you all waiting! This is Tanaka’s special drink!”

“S-Special.....?”

Sawamura’s lips twitched as he looked into the basket, then became nervous. Those were the familiar bottles they use all the time, but now it looked no less than ominous objects. The other members were all restricting each other, with no one willing to grab their own bottles.

Nishinoya, ignoring the slight pause, patted Tanaka on his back as he laughed.

“Ryuu, what are you saying? These are just ordinary sports drink!”

“Wahahahaha! It’s got to do with the feels, feels!”

The two of them laughed naively. Compared to them, Sawamura’s smile felt more forced.

“Ha, haha, can you guys stop scaring us.....”

Sawamura grabbed a bottle, the other members, as if relieved, grabbed their own bottles too.

“I’m so thirsty!”

Upon saying, the sweaty Hinata took a big gulp of the drink.

Everyone focused their attention onto his face.

“..... Hmm?”

Hinata’s face turned pale all of a sudden.

“Urghhhhh, Urghhhfdljlkdaldjkdldklajaksdjal!”

Hinata tried to speak with his mouth full, then covered his mouth and ran to the toilet. Seeing his back view, the other members, who have treated Hinata as a guinea pig, stiffened their bodies. Then, they looked at the bottles they were holding, then started talking among themselves:

“As expected.....”

“Thank god I didn’t drink it.”

“That guy drank so much in one go, I hope he’s okay.....”

Sawamura asked the two of them while pointing at the bottle.

“What did you guys add into the drink?”

“I only made the usual sports drink.....”

Tanaka tilted his head, confused. Under the glare of everyone else, he picked up a bottle, slightly afraid, then took a sip. He spit out the drink almost immediately.

“..... Uwah! Isn't this saltwater? Noya-san, what did you add inside?”

“Ah? Salt? That white powder in the kitchen wasn't the powdered sports drink?”

Everyone turned to look at Nishinoya, then thought of just how much salt had been added in. If they had added in the same amount of salt as the usual sports drink powder, the salt level in the drink would be almost the same as the sea water's. the sports drink was supposed to help replenish sodium for the body, but now it had become a totally different thing.

The members were all engulfed in fear. Nishinoya smacked himself on his forehead as the other members stared at him

“..... Is that right? It's actually salt? Sorry, I made a mistake!”

“You..... made a mistake? Then, Tanaka's should be fine?”

Hearing Sawamura's question, Tanaka raised his chest:

“Of course! To alleviate everyone of their fatigue, I have specially prepared a sports drink five times its usual concentration!”

“Huh?”

Hearing this unexpected concentration, the members trembled with fear.

“Hehe, I have lavishly used five times the usual amount of powder to make the drinks, guaranteed to relieve fatigue instantly. Tanaka's special sports drink has five times the gentleness! Instead of calling it a sports drink, we should call it a supplement instead!”

Seeing the Tanaka smiling proudly, Sugawara mumbled:

“Thank god we verified with him before drinking.....”

“This is just like the Russian roulette, where there’s only saltwater and super concentration sports drink to choose from, there’s nowhere to hide.”

Azumane smiled bitterly as he picked up a bottle.

The other members returned their bottles back into the basket.

Tanaka and Nishinoya didn’t do it on purpose, and they had no ill intentions. But precisely because so, there was no way of knowing when they’ll strike again. This is really scary.

“I get it. I get it already, can I trouble you guys to redo the usual sports drink! It doesn’t matter if it’s not as good as Shimizu’s, just make sure it’s the ordinary one, alright?”

Sawamura flashed a subtle smile. Hearing him, Tanaka and Nishinoya’s eyes glistened.

“The same as Kiyoko-san’s..... Okay! Noya-san, let’s complete and see how can better replace her!”

“I agree!”

The two of them rushed out while carrying the baskets. After the sounds of bottles knocking against each other disappeared, the other members in the gymnasium finally spoke:

“Kiyoko-san will come tomorrow, right.....”

The members stood rooted to the ground. Just then, Hinata returned after rinsing his mouth.

“Ah, that scared me. My tongue is all prickly..... Eh? Is everyone okay?”

He looked at everyone of them, his expression surprised. Then, he realised the guilt in everyone’s eyes.

“Eh? Only I drank it?”

Afterwards the two managers for the day started scrubbing the floor passionately, causing Yamaguchi to jump around; Tanaka had applied on the kinesio tape on Tsukishima too tight, so much so he couldn’t move around freely; Nishinoya forgot to do timekeeping, causing Kageyama to do a whole 10-odd

minutes more of spiking and passing; there were just too many victims.

If the two of them had slacked off while practicing, then at least there would be a reason to nag at them. But it was exactly the opposite, and in fact they did their practice even more diligently than usual, and in their free time, did their managerial duties diligently.

Probably because they felt as if they were doing “the same job as Kiyoko-san!”. But their hard work did not meet with a positive outcome, with the members suffering one by one.

—

When it was break time, one of the victims, Azumane, was just about to go wash his feet after leaving the gymnasium. He had asked the managers for a cooling spray earlier, but Nishinoya handed him a bottle of hair gel instead, and Azumane, without thinking, used it immediately.

“Why would there be hair gel in the gymnasium..... although I can understand that they’re very tired, but is it normal to mix up the two items.....?”

Azumane whined as he walked to the tap. Just then, he saw a lot of bubbles.

“Eh?”

Azumane looked up in surprise, and saw more bubbles flying around. The iridescent bubbles flew up the blue sky, then burst with a tiny sound.

“W-What, is going on?”

Seeing this contrasting phenomenon against the smelly gymnasium, Azumane started looking for the source of the bubbles. He looked around, then realised it came from within the main building. He heard a weird noise.

“..... What is going on there?”

Azumane looked on shockingly and couldn’t believe what he saw. Peeking into the building, the whole place was covered with bubbles.

“W-What, is this?”

The shocked Azumane heard a familiar voice.

“Ah, Asahi senpai!”

“Asahi-san, you came at the right time!”

Hearing their voices, Azumane tried to run by reflex, but he got caught by the two of them. Needless to say, the two of them were Tanaka and Nishinoya.

Unable to escape, Azumane gave up struggling. It couldn't be anything good..... He thought to himself as he asked while pointing at the huge amount of bubbles:

“..... What is happening here?”

“Uh, we have no idea how to use the washing machine.”

“We were guessing it has malfunctioned?”

The two of them glanced at each other at they spoke.

“..... Eh? This is the washing machine?”

Azumane then recalled that this was indeed where the washing machine was placed. Azumane brushed aside the bubbles that were flying around, and indeed as the two said, an old washing machine appeared in front of his eyes. The bubbles came from the washing machine. Just how much washing powder have they added in order for this foreign movie-like scene to happen.....

“What are you guys doing?”

“Uh, nothing much.”

“That's right.”

Seeing the two of them looking at each other feeling relaxed, the usually good-tempered Azumane could not stand it too, he removed the plug from the power point. The washing machine finally stopped producing bubbles.

“Woah, you're so smart!”

“As expected of Asahi senpai!”

“Ah, uh.....”

Praised continuously by the two, Azumane felt an unexplained sense of fatigue. He moved his neck, and just then Ennoshita peeked out from behind.

“Ah, everyone is here..... What is this.....”

Ennoshita looked on at the massive amount of bubbles in shock, then turned around, as if avoiding the problem.

“..... The captain said to start group matches, and asked everyone to gather at the gymnasium.”

“Is that so! Alright, I’ll definitely not lose!”

“Me too!”

Tanaka and Nishinoya dashed out energetically. “Ah, wait.....” Ennoshita trailed behind them. Azumane was left all alone, he stared at the washing machine covered with bubbles.

“Hey, this.....”

Staring at the silent washing machine, Azumane felt as though it was asking him for help as it continued staring at him.

“I didn’t spoil this..... what should I do.....”

The spoiled washing machine of course couldn’t answer, it only remained at where it was, still covered in bubbles. Staring at the washing machine, Azumane suddenly teared up.

“Ooh, ooh wahhhhhh, sorry, sorry.....!”

Azumane ran back to the gymnasium, forgetting that he hadn’t washed the hair gel off his leg.....

—

“Those guys, what should I do with them.....”

Sawamura grumbled, his face a sorrowful expression.

“They have worked hard.”

Azumane said while Sugawara nodded in agreement.

“That’s right. But I’m worried that they’ll hurt themselves while working too hard. It’s quite a problem, seeing our members get hurt every now and then.

“Members getting hurt.....”

After much deliberation, Sawamura came to a decision.

We'll get them to quit.

Upon coming to that conclusion, Sawamura ran to look for Takeda sensei. If they don't get rid of these two's positions as managers, the other members may suffer even more not just from injury or sickness, but from stress that may impede the team's spirit. Before all of these happens, Sawamura had to get them to quit first.

The clock struck 6, and Takeda sensei should be preparing dinner for everyone right now. Upon returning to the dormitory, Sawamura ran towards the canteen. He opened the door.

There was no smell of food yet, but Sawamura heard Takeda's passionate voice.

"I'm in admiration of your dedication!"

Hearing this, Sawamura flinched. It seemed that Tanaka and Nishinoya were inside, too. Seeing how good the atmosphere is right now, it would be difficult to tell the two to quit their positions and managers.....

"Not only do you guys practice hard, you guys did all of the manager's job too, this is not something that everyone can do! You guys are as energetic as superheroes!

No one can be as clumsy as these fellows, too..... Sawamura thought to himself as he continued eavesdropping.

"We'll continue helping each other! Your dedication to the team will make the whole team become more united!"

"Yes!"

Right now, the whole team cannot unite themselves, no thanks to you two..... Hearing their energetic replies, Sawamura felt as though he was going to collapse onto the floor.

Takeda, unknown the state Sawamura was in, continued saying:

"Then, we'll make steamed rice with the broad beans coach Ukai gave to us for dinner! Also, we'll make oden with the big pot. This is the last dinner with everyone else, so let's work hard!"

“Osu!”

“We’re cooking, we’re cooking!”

Sawamura felt uneasy looking at their excited faces, but as long as sensei is with them, there shouldn’t be much problem. Sawamura decided to think positively.

All that’s left were the preparations for tomorrow.

If the two of them stayed here to prepare dinner, at least they wouldn’t bother the other members. Although they do make mistakes, but just like what sensei said, they worked hard and did not slack off from their practices. He probably shouldn’t have been a wet blanket.....

Sawamura closed the door gently and left the canteen.

If he had stayed to listen to their conversation, everything would have changed, then. Sadly, there’s no such thing as “if only”.

Takeda continued saying:

“I’ll go buy some drinks back. I’m leaving the rest to you guys. Please look at the recipe I’ve written down.”

“Leave it all to us!”

With that, Takeda left the kitchen to the two, then headed out immediately.

Trusting his students 100% with things is easier said than done, but Takeda did just that. He could probably become a model teacher. The kitchen, which decides the health and wellness of the members, is now solely at the hands of Tanaka and Nishinoya.

—

Once they were left alone, Nishinoya spoke:

“Ryuu, what’s a recipe?”

“How would I know, but, hmm, sensei did write down the methods of preparing the dishes, so let’s read them as we do.”

“Yeah yeah.”

Looking through Takeda's recipe, Nishinoya rolled up with sleeves.

"It appears that we just have to add the broad beans to the rice and cook them together."

"What, that's it? That's simple."

Tanaka put in the rice into the rice cooker, then started washing the rice grains awkwardly. Nishinoya continued reading the recipe.

"Uh..... "add in the broad beans, then add in 100ml of water. Take note, if you add in the water before the beans, it'll become too soft." Hmm? Will there be any difference if we mix up the steps?"

"I don't know. But if that's what Take-chan said, then let's just follow it."

"That makes sense."

Nishinoya nodded. He was about to add in the broad beans, but his broad beans were not deshelled.

"Hey, hey, Noya-san!"

Tanaka stopped him immediately.

"What is it?"

Nishinoya had his eyes wide as Tanaka took away the broad beans from his hands.

"You can't put the broad beans in like this."

"Hmm? Is it?"

"You have to washed the beans before putting them in..... There're raccoon dogs around."

"Ah, right, you're right!"

The two of them took the broad beans over to the sink, then deshelled the broad beans and washed them. Even as the sink and their clothes were wet from them washing the beans, they still continued washing them diligently.

"..... This should do!"

"Yeah, perfect."

The two of them then added in the well-polished beans, along with the shells, into the rice pot. The beans scattered among the rice grains.

Looking at the pot of rice, Tanaka tilted his head in suspicion.

“..... Is this really correct?”

“Ah ah! I’ve seen it on television once.... I think it was “Good evening everyone”? The guys on the sea cooked the snapper they just caught immediately with rice in the rice cooker.”

“Oh, that sounds really delicious!”

Tanaka totally forgot about the trouble he had awhile ago while thinking about the snapper rice.

“Indeed, cooking a fish in whole in the cooker is the way of a man!”

“Oh!..... So we add in the bean before the water?”

The two of them proceeded on to adding the water carefully.

“ “Add a pinch of salt into a tablespoon of cooking wine, then wait for 30 minutes for the rice to absorb the water, then press down the button.” Take-chan is so meticulous, but what does it matter, we should press it now.....”

“No way, Ryuu. We can’t betray the trust Take-chan had in us!”

“..... Right, that’s right that’s right! Alright, while we wait, let’s prepare the ingredients for the oden!”

The two of them walked away from the rice cooker.

In the dark pot, the rice grains and broad beans were slowly absorbing the water. Tanaka and Nishinoya on the other hand are in full preparation mode for the oden.

While looking through the recipe, Tanaka added in the seasoning bit by bit.

“ “One cup of soy sauce, half a cup of mirin””

“Then, I’ll preparing the daikon.”

“Thanks for the trouble, Noya-san.”

The two of them, cringing their noses, prepared the dinner seriously. Although

there were many mistakes made, they were all focused on doing what was at hand.

No wonder Takeda was “in admiration”, looking at them working hard.

Tanaka switched off the stove while looking into the pot.

“I’m done here, I’ll go prepare the potatoes now.”

“Thanks.”

The two of them stood side by side, peeling of the skin of the vegetables unskillfully.

“..... Peeling of the skin of vegetables is such trouble.”

“But if we don’t do it properly, the others will definitely complain.”

“That’s true.”

The two of them continued peeling while mumbling.

“..... Will they really eat what we cook?”

“Yeah, they eat everything.”

“That’s true.”

“There’s a match tomorrow, so everyone has to eat well to gain enough energy.”

“Yup yup.”

Thunk, thunk, thunk, the sound on the chopping block sounded rhythmically, and after awhile, although the shapes were not uniform, they finally completed preparing the vegetables.

They then took out the fish paste Takeda had bought and left in the refrigerator earlier, along with the remaining ingredients, then placed them onto the plate. Tanaka and Nishinoya then looked at each other, clearly satisfied.

“Whew.”

“Hehe.”

All that’s left was leaving the oden to cook.

“Uh..... “add in ingredients such as daikon and potatoes first, which takes a longer time to cook” wait, what other ingredients take a longer time to cook?”

“The mochis and konbu look quick to cook.”

“so are the fish balls, beef tendon and Vienna sausages.”

The two of them stared at the plates, slightly confused.

“Hmm, but oden usually tastes better if left overnight, if we eat it today, the flavour doesn’t seem to be as good, should I say it’s too bland.....”

Nishinoya said while poking the daikons with chopsticks, just then Tanaka smiled his signature smile.

“Hah, can’t believe I’m making use of a certain trick passed down to me from my mum.....”

“What’s that?”

“Listen carefully, for daikons and potatoes.....”

Tanaka popped the ingredients into the microwave while speaking. After it was done, Tanaka opened the microwave and took out the softened vegetables.

“Hey, what should we do about this.”

“Just wait and see. If we add the softened vegetables into the pot.....”

Tanaka added the vegetables into the boiling pot, and they looked delicious after absorbing the broth.

“That’s awesome! What kind of trick is that? It looks delicious already! Ryuu’s mum is awesome!”

“Hehehe, this will make the vegetables soft and delicious! This is not my mum’s, but a time-saving trick featured on “Good evening everyone”!”

“Time-saving..... as in a quick attack?”

“Hehe.....”

Tanaka and Nishinoya smiled as they looked at each other.

Just then the door opened. Sawamura, worried about the situation in the

kitchen, came back again.

“Oh, what is this? It smells delicious.”

Sawamura, surprised, asked the two of them, who were standing in front of the pot.

“I am surprised to see you guys doing a good job, so much so for worrying earlier.”

Finishing his sentence, Sawamura glanced at the big pot, then picked up a piece of daikon with his chopsticks. Tanaka and Nishinoya looked on with satisfaction.

Just then, Tanaka remembered.

“Oh no, there’s still the eggs!”

“Ryu, quick attack!”

“Okay!”

Sawamura looked at the two with his chopsticks still in his hands.

Tanaka placed the egg Nishinoya gave to him straight into the microwave.

“Press, the button!”

With a beep, the microwave started working. Looking at the two working together, Sawamura nodded.

“Yeah, well done, you guys have worked together well.”

The three of them looked at each other satisfactorily. Just then Sawamura’s face paled.

“..... Eh? Did you guys just put the egg.....”

At the same time, explosion, screams as well as the change of atmosphere happened all at once.

—

“I thought I was going to die.”

Sawamura, who had just taken a bath, sighed as he sat down at the table. Sugawara smiled while consoling him.

“But, just let it go, the dinner turned out delicious, what matters most is the end product, right.....”

Just like what Sugawara said, the fluffy broad bean rice, the delicious oden, along with the side dishes, pizza and fried chicken provided for by the club’s alumni from Shimada mart to show his support for his juniors filled the whole dining table.

“Alright, let’s pick ourselves up again.....”

“Let’s eat!”

The hungry members picked up their chopsticks all at once. For a moment, everyone ate quietly, with the occasional remarks such as “pass me the soy sauce”, “um”, “ah, there’s bones” across the table.

Azumane asked Hinata to get him another bowl of rice, then looked at it as he said:

“If Sugawara hadn’t noticed, this delicious pot of rice would have become something inedible.....”

“Those guys forgot to press the start button.....”

Thinking back about what happened 30 minutes earlier, Sugawara managed a bitter smile.

The members who were returning to the dormitory after a day’s practice were all shocked by the sudden explosion. Everyone rushed to the kitchen, only to see Sawamura, along with the trembling Tanaka and Nishinoya covered in egg.

“We couldn’t help but worry if something major had happened.”

“It looked like a crime scene no matter how you look at it.....”

Recalling the horrible state the kitchen was in, Tsukishima cringed.

Sugawara brought Sawamura to the bathroom to wash up, then returned to clean up the kitchen before realising that the button on the rice cooker had not been pressed down. He opened the lid, only to see the rice still raw, then exclaimed in shock.

“I thought it was some sort of curse. Hehe, but the broad beans are well-

washed, and after deshelling them you could cook them right away.”

Tanaka raised his hands timidly, his mouth stuffed full of Vienna sausages.

“..... I was the one who told Nishinoya to wash it..... oh.”

Tanaka shrank his body under everybody’s stares. Hinata said to him:

“But the oden is really delicious. The daikon is very flavourful, very delicious!”

Ennoshita, who was sitting beside Hinata, nodded in agreement, then passed Hinata a glass of water, who had scalded himself by biting into the daikon in one mouthful. Seeing this, Sugawara reached for a slice of pizza, then said emotionally:

“But it’s really tough without Shimizu-san.....”

Everyone nodded in agreement.

“Usually we’d use the towels naturally, but that’s because Shimizu-san has folded them nicely.....”

“The volleyballs were well-pumped too.”

“Thinking carefully, I think we have Shimizu-san to thank for us to be able to practice comfortably like this.....”

“Her being on leave made us realise we have a long way to go.....”

Everyone nodded in agreement once again, Tanaka and Nishinoya suddenly screamed:

“Which means Kiyoko-san is really a goddess!”

“.....We get it, you two repent on your actions too.”

Hearing Sawamura, Tanaka became depressed once again. But he stood up suddenly.

“..... Oh no!”

“W-What, is it again this time.....”

Sawamura’s face stiffened.

“The towels and the uniforms in the washing machine!”

“Ah, those! They’re all still inside the washing machine!”

Nishinoya stood up immediately too, a rice grain stuck to his cheeks.

“We’re heading out for awhile!”

The two temporary managers, in order to complete their work for the day, dashed out of the canteen, the food on the table still piping hot.

—

The second day, May 6th, 7am.

Shimizu Kiyoko arrived at the gymnasium punctually.

Just as she was heading into the equipment room to prepare the equipments for today, the members who walked past her all bowed with a serious look on their faces.

“Shimizu-san, thank you for everything you’ve done.”

“Thank you, you’ve helped us a lot on the way.”

Shimizu tilted her head in surprise. Once she confirmed that all balls have been fully pumped, she walked into the club room, then her face paled.

The first aid box that was arranged nicely before had become all messy, the towels and uniforms, all folded messily, let out a damp smell.....

She was caught up in shock, unsure what had happened. Once she entered the washing room, she saw what was even more shocking. The washing machine had twisted in shape, its water pipe and plug all disconnected.

“What is this.....”

Shimizu stood in front of the washing machine, her shoulders trembling. Takeda then called her from behind.

“Shimizu-san! Are you feeling better already?”

Shimizu nodded, slightly frowning.

“Heh, you do look better than yesterday. Both Tanaka-san and Nishinoya-san did a lot yesterday!”

Takeda was all smiles as he spoke, while Tanaka and Nishinoya blushed in

embarrassment behind him.

From the looks of the three guys, Shimizu could probably guess what happened yesterday. With regards to the details, Shimizu had no wish to learn of them.

Tanaka and Nishinoya sank their shoulders, clearly disheartened. But Shimizu said to them:

“..... Thank you.”

Hearing this, the two of them stopped their movements.

“Eh.....”

“Really.....”

The morning breeze blew past, a crow flew from above the beech tree beside the club room. Its shadow cast above the four of them, then flew past the roof of the gymnasium.

Tanaka and Nishinoya ran out of the gymnasium blushing.

“We must win today!”

“Just you wait, Nekoma!”

Seeing their diminishing back views, Shimizu mumbled softly to herself:

“I will never..... take another leave.”

-end-

The last chapter (re-upload)

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May 6th

8:50am

May 6th, 8:50am. Karasuno's integrated sports park's court— The members of the Karasuno men's volleyball club gathered at the court in Karasuno's integrated sports park.

Today is the highlight of the training camp, where they will be having a practice match with Nekoma High School, which has travelled all the way here from Tokyo.

Coach Ukai Keishin could barely hide his excitement.

The matches against Nekoma High School had always been dubbed as "historical matches". And among the members of Karasuno men's volleyball club, Ukai was the only one who ever had a real match against Nekoma High School. Nekoma's current coach is his rival from back then, Naoi Manabu, while the main coach Nekomata Yasufumi was a star player from a long time ago, who also happened to have a deep friendship with Ukai's grandfather. There was no way for Ukai to not be nervous.

The most important of all, was that Karasuno had never once won against Nekoma in past matches. Hence, winning the match this time meant more than anything.

Ukai looked at the club members, who walked into the court one by one. The team's best moodmaker, Tanaka, flashed a fearless smile.

"Just you wait, you city boys, you'll see.....!"

"Osu!"

The members' morale rose in that instant.

Not surprisingly, the members today were all high in morale and enthusiasm.

Then, Ukai looked on at Takeda, the team's consultant and main coach.

This guy right here visited me everyday despite countless rejections from me, he in his own capacity managed to contact Nekoma High School and turn this match into a reality.

"Sensei..... thanks."

"Eh?"

Takeda turned around, slightly flustered.

"Ah, sorry, what is it? I was busy looking for the scoring table....."

Takeda, who was looking through his bag earlier, seemed to not hear what Ukai said.

"..... Nothing."

To hide his embarrassment, Ukai turned to face the other side. Kageyama glared at Hinata while frowning.

"Listen, don't be as nervous as before."

"Yeah! Everyone on "this side of the court" are my allies, right!"

Hinata replied. Although his expression was still a bit tense, he looked at every member with innocent eyes, then nodded hard.

This should be no problem..... Ukai thought. Sawamura shouted beside him:

"Gather!"

The members lifted their heads.

As if waiting for a good rival, the members of Nekoma's volleyball club have long stood in a row at the side of the court. In contrast with the Nekoma's volleyball club members who were clad in red, the members of Karasuno's men volleyball club stood in a row, all clad in black.

"The battle of the trash heaps" between the cats and the crows.....

Under the command of Sawamura.

"Greet!"

"Let's have a good game!"

After a period of five years, the match finally began.

-end-